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ABSTRACT

These papers on adult education in Australia are grouped into four parts: (1) articles concerning some directors of university extension and adult education; (2) a paper entitled "Who Killed the WEA (Workers Educational Association)--A Footnote to History"; (3) two papers called respectively "Sir Keith Hancock--A Tribute from a Grateful Pupil" and "Hancock's Notes on Machiavelli"; and (4) an article entitled: "The Madonna of Bunbury." The six papers written about directors of university extension and adult education are: (1) "Meredith Atkinson"; (2) "An Adult Education Tragedy--John Alexander Gunn"; (3) "C. R. Badger"; (4) "G. V. Portus"; (5) "Walter George Keith Duncan"; and (6) "Desmond Crowley." (NLA)

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C R BADGER
DIRECTOR OF ADULT EDUCATION
VICTORIA
1947 - 1971

Council of Adult Education
Melbourne 1991

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FOREWORD

Tony Delves
Director of Adult Education, Victoria, 1979–1990

Although there is no doubt plenty of room for a scholarly academic assessment of the work of Colin Badger, his autobiography, *Who Was Badger?*, and this collection are testimony to the achievements of an exceptional educator. This is further confirmed in Patrick Crudden's short analysis of his work in the *Australian Journal of Adult Education (vol. 28, no. 3).*

And, in the end, the Council of Adult Education itself stands as the formal monument to that achievement, described by Badger himself as 'the most important single development in adult education in Australia'.

Colin Badger, almost single handed, turned the face of Australian adult education after the Second World War. Although he was not alone in recognising the limitations of university-WEA based adult education, as the paper on W G K Duncan shows, he was able to make the leap from theorising about what should be done to putting the theories into practice.

It is no doubt true that he '...had a clear understanding of what [he] wanted to achieve' and '...had a clear head and a good deal of luck', but it is also true that he had a great capacity to seize the main chance and to give effect to change when others remained lost in almost idle backwaters. None of his predecessors in Melbourne and in Sydney—Atkinson, Gunn, Portus or Duncan—could make that leap. All were so constrained by the institutional framework in which they worked, so caught up in the day by day intrigues of their often petty wars, that they were unable to bring about real change.

Duncan, for example, was certainly developing a new approach in the 1940s, but did not implement necessary changes even though he had the opportunity to do so. Badger also had the ideas, in parallel but not entirely in isolation, at about the same time, but took his chance and acted. The analysis of the reasons for this difference makes absorbing reading, even today.

In fact, Badger saw very quickly in his career that the university was not a suitable base for 'popular adult education' and that the WEA was far from being relevant to workers' education. Neither university nor WEA, as he realised, was true to its purpose and he recognised that something new and independent was essential. Badger may not have 'killed the WEA in Victoria', as he argues in his paper on that theme, but he was certainly there to assist actively in the last rites.

Badger's ideas gained wide acceptance throughout Australia, although with varying degrees of success, over the next ten years. In retrospect, how sad that Crowley in Sydney could not make that necessary conceptual leap. Into the 1980s he still sustained the narrow vision, unable to comprehend the great changes which had not merely passed him by but had almost overwhelmed him.

I still recall the occasion, just before he retired, when Crowley told me how Badger had subverted 'true' adult education by straying from the great 'Liberal Tradition'. The CAE, to him, dealt in trivia and was bereft of academic depth. He could not comprehend that, even then, CAE maintained a much larger academic adult education program than did his university.

In the midst of what had become a moribund tradition, Badger provided energy and a conceptual framework not seen before in Australian adult education and rarely seen elsewhere. Quite apart from the setting up of CAE, his level of innovation is staggering and matched by few other adult educators. The book discussion groups, the establishment of *Meanjin* in Victoria, the travelling theatre, the purchase of the Russell Street Theatre, the Summer Schools, the development of the Ola Cohn Centre, the support of the emerging country continuing education centres at Wangaratta and elsewhere—these examples and many others are testimony to his innovative energy and verve, and his capacity to extend the boundaries of adult education.

What makes these achievements even more impressive is that they are firmly based in a personal view of the role of adult education which is perhaps the clearest statement of a general philosophy for the field that I have come across. No student of adult education could do better than to read page 23 of this book. Consider the following: 'Underlying all my adult education practice and my thought about what to do and how to do it were my convictions about the nature of personal freedom in a modern society...'; and 'I thought that the main obstacle to the exercise of central power was the existence and functioning of institutions and agencies which did not derive their ideas or their power from the State...'; and 'My view was that adult education, while State supported, ought to be as free as possible from political direction or control.'

How pertinent these comments have been over the years as governments have sought, not always successfully, to balance these principles against a desire to bring adult education under various levels of coordination or control.

Of course the man is much more complex than this. Some of his colleagues found him, as did Duncan, machiavellian. (There is, therefore, some irony in the reproduction of Hancock's Notes on Machiavelli in this book.) He certainly had a reputation for not suffering fools gladly, for creating fire and brimstone even when hell did not necessarily threaten, for turning small issues into great ones, and for overstating his case. All of these 'vices' Badger himself readily acknowledges as he reflects on a long past.

My own first meeting with Badger was in 1979 when I was contemplating applying for the position of Director after the unfortunate death of Colin Cave. I found him then—and have not changed my views since—full of good sense and good stories, enthusiastic, quick in mind, with an astonishing capacity to remember people, events, places and dates; a caring and thoughtful man.

From that time on I have been proud of my warm friendship with Colin and his wife, Stella: made stronger by their joint concern for the future of CAE and of adult education, and by their love of birds. One of my greatest pleasures was to take them both to Altona beach one summer to see the Golden Plovers on migration.

He also likes to pretend that he was an inept administrator: his achievements give the lie to that proposition. There may be more substance to his reflective concern that he should have made more of the office of Director of Adult Education, that he did not understand that raising the status of the CAE was in some measure linked to the status of his own position. Yet the standing of CAE as a major adult education agency on the world scene has never been in doubt.

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Colin Badger's premier place in the history of Australian adult education is secure, however much he might feel that 'it is too early to attempt a critical assessment of my work'. He is a great educator and this collection is further testimony to this fact.

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PREFACE

All of the papers which are included herein are as originally written, with the exception of minor editorial changes, some more recent information and the matters noted below.

The paper on Meredith Atkinson was originally published in an edited version, not approved by me, and is here published in full. Sir Keith Hancock's *Notes on Machiavelli* are published for the first time and give the reader an insight into the working habits of a great historian.

If the paper by Badger on Badger seems to be intolerably egotistical, I can only plead that I have tried hard to be objective in it and to stick to the facts. It was unlikely that any other writer would bother to make such a study!

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I am deeply indebted to the Council of Adult Education for making this publication possible. In particular I have appreciated the help of Elvira Shenoy, who typed the manuscript, of Patrick Crudden, Assistant Director, of Deborah Stephan and Jill Eastwood, who worked on the footnotes, proofreading and other matters, and of Tony Delves, former Director of Adult Education, who edited and laid out the publication and kindly wrote the Foreword.

CRB
South Yarra, April 1991

INTRODUCTION

It is possible that very few people concerned with adult education today know anything about the university Extension Boards or about the Workers' Educational Association (WEA). Yet these two institutions were the pioneers of adult education in Australia and until the Council of Adult Education (CAE) began operations in 1947 they were the main agencies concerned to provide it.

Both were modelled on English institutions. An Extension Board was set up by the Universities of Melbourne in 1891 and Sydney in 1892, following the precedent of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Their function was to offer lectures on topics falling within the normal compass of university studies to such members of the public as were interested and willing to comply with conditions imposed by the university and to pay the necessary fees. Some courses were offered which involved serious study and, for some, certificates of attendance and competence were offered. For the most part, however, Extension lectures were offered as single lectures, both in country centres and in the cities and they attracted, on the whole, an already reasonably well educated and affluent audience. It was the high cost of the service which limited the spread of Extension as a form of adult education for a wider audience.

In 1913 a new form of adult education, again based on an English precedent, was introduced. This was the Workers' Educational Association, founded in Australia on the initiative of the ophthalmologist, social reformer, university lecturer and leader Dr—later Sir—James Barrett, who paid the expenses of the English founder of the WEA, Albert Mansbridge, and his wife for a visit to Australia to establish an Australian WEA. The effect of Mansbridge's visit was remarkable. Every State in the Commonwealth set up a WEA on the English pattern and all received some help and encouragement from governments and from the universities, as well as from the organised labor movement.

In origin and intention, the WEA was not an attempt to provide an intensive and less expensive form of university education than that offered by Extension. It was severely limited both in the range of those whom it was designed to attract and in the kind and quality of the education it offered. It was first and foremost designed to attract an *élite* of trade unionists—potential leaders of the working class who were to be given a rigorous intellectual training in small groups, originally intended to lead eventually to admission to universities and to the normal courses for degrees or diplomas. Each student bound himself to attend regularly for a period of three years, to read the prescribed books and to undertake written work at the request of the tutor. The classes were small, never more than twelve persons, and the method of instruction was that favoured at Oxford and Cambridge, discussion and colloquy between tutor and taught—hence they were called tutorial classes.

The English model also implied a novel feature, that of a close working relationship between a voluntary association, the WEA, and the university, generally represented by the Extension Board, actualised in a joint committee of WEA and university representatives and known as the Joint Committee for Tutorial Classes. This was originally a sub-committee of the Extension Board. The theory behind this arrangement was that the WEA was to organise and recruit student members of Tutorial Classes and to present their requests for tuition to the university, which would thereupon provide tutors from its own staff or if necessary from among extra-university teachers. The plan thus envisaged each doing its appropriate work—the voluntary agency organising, recruiting, carrying out propaganda and contact work especially in the Trade Unions, with the university teaching, setting standards and giving educational inspection. It soon became necessary in the English universities to appoint special officers to supervise the work and these, called Directors of Tutorial Classes, became the executive officers of new departments, known as Tutorial Classes Departments, whose governing boards were the Joint Committees. The WEA likewise soon found it essential to appoint paid professional secretaries and other workers while retaining the form and status of voluntary associations. The University of Sydney followed this pattern and appointed Meredith Atkinson as the first Director of Tutorial Classes in 1914.

The Tutorial Classes–WEA success was initially greater than that of Extension. While Extension work had to be wholly paid for by those who undertook it, the Tutorial Classes were supported and subsidised from the beginning by grants made to the universities for the purpose; fees therefore were kept low and the universities were able to help the WEAs by modest grants for salaries and other expenses.

The limitations and restrictions imposed by this conceptual framework were soon apparent. In spite of the devoted labours of the pioneers, workers willing to submit to the rigorous discipline required were very few and hard to find. The trade unionists, it seemed, were by no means as keen on a solid diet of Trade Union History, Economics, Political Economy, Sociology and so on as their well meaning university teachers believed they should be. Some unionists saw the WEA as an agency of the capitalists to deceive the workers and attacked it; most were blandly indifferent and the few who joined the classes generally failed to complete the full three year course and fewer still, if any, pursued their studies to university level. There was soon an urgent demand for shorter courses and for a less exacting and more practical curriculum—Public Speaking, Chairmanship, English Expression—frowned upon by the academics, but ardently pressed by the WEA organisers who saw no other way to recruit members. By 1918, 'study circles'—short courses intended to be preparatory to tutorial classes, but in fact a substitute for them—were started and soon all pretence of serious academic standards or rigorous intellectual effort in tutorial classes extending over three years was abandoned, although unsuccessful sporadic attempts were made in both Sydney and Melbourne to re-impose them on a recalcitrant student body.

It was not long before the institutional arrangements were revealed to be about as unsatisfactory as the educational plans. When the university Departments of Tutorial Classes began to appoint permanent tutors, apart from the Directors of Tutorial Classes, these were styled Tutor Organisers, thus signalling that the universities were about to embark on organising as well as teaching, and providing a source of rivalry and conflict with the WEA. Likewise the universities, wishing to rid themselves of teaching in areas such as Public Speaking, which could hardly be called academic, allowed the organising body, the WEA, in its turn to become a teaching body. Soon the whole pattern became confused and muddled—the classes were now almost universally called WEA classes and though they continued, for the most part, to be taught by tutors formally appointed by the universities, the WEA became the main agency in providing instruction in an increasingly wide range of topics at a decreasingly serious standard, in response to public demand. There were soon no tutorial classes on the original model, only courses of 10 to 21 lectures, lasting for one hour each, with perhaps 10 to 15 minutes at the end for question and answer. In some instances, classes were very large, ranging from 20 or so to an impossible 400 for an exceptionally popular lecturer.

In Victoria, as I have shown in the succeeding papers, the functions of the Director of Tutorial Classes and the University Extension Board were usurped by the energetic and intriguing WEA Secretary and by 1938 the University had ceased to exercise any effective control or supervision over the work. As I see it, the muddles and difficulties of this period were largely due to the inability of the main protagonists to free themselves from preconceptions and ideas, largely inherited or acquired from England, which had little relation to the facts of life in Australia. It also seems reasonable to assume from an examination of the syllabuses of WEAs that there was a growing demand for a form of popular adult education suited to the needs of an emerging but still relatively undereducated middle class. There was virtually no demand at all for workers' education provided by non-working class institutions such as the WEA and the universities. There was, in the period under discussion (1919–1946), virtually no demand at all for mature age university entrance and education, although this was to change under the arrangements for Post-War Reconstruction. To a marked extent, the universities and WEA seem to have done their best to thwart and throttle the demand for a genuine and extended adult education, not at all from ill will but because they could not free themselves from their preconceptions. To the last they insisted that what was important was Workers' Education and that it had to be at university standard. What there was in fact was a growing demand for general education on the part of the better educated middle class and no concern at all with university standards.

It is therefore likely that the failure to break free from the past and its ideas is largely the reason for the frustration and breakdown in at least two of the figures recorded in these articles. They knew that their work did not correspond with their theories and that they were in a false position. What had to be seen clearly was that they were concerned with popular adult education and with nothing else. Once that had been grasped, they would have been able to see that neither the university nor the WEA was a suitable institutional form for the new concept and they would have been able to escape the cords that bound them and to have shaped a new institutional form suited to the work in hand. The thinking, however, had to be done first and perhaps it could not have been done by Atkinson or Gunn, the two major pioneers of adult education in Australia, but only when time had revealed the issues more clearly.

PART I

SOME DIRECTORS OF UNIVERSITY EXTENSION AND ADULT EDUCATION

MEREDITH ATKINSON

Australia's First Director of Tutorial Classes
University of Sydney, 1914–1917
University of Melbourne, 1918–1922

Since there is no comprehensive history of adult education in Australia there is no published account of the first professional Director of Adult Education in an Australian university, Meredith Atkinson. Should anyone seek for information about him, he or she will look in vain in the scanty literature so far published. Yet he was an interesting and somewhat tragic figure[1].

An attentive reader of Derek Whitelock's chapter on the development of the Tutorial Class–WEA movement in NSW[2] will conclude that the author knew very little about Atkinson, the first Director of the structure he is describing. He mentions him only in connection with the controversy over conscription in 1915–16 but says nothing about his career or personality or influence on the young Tutorial Class–WEA movement. He wrote, 'The WEA and the tutorial class idea struck their deepest roots in New South Wales, partly because of the adult education traditions there but mainly because of the powerful personalities that became involved—Stewart, Board, Portus and others'[3]. This grouping is most interesting. The omission of Atkinson's name may imply that Whitelock thought he made no contribution at all: it is much more likely that it means only that he did not know what that contribution really was.

If his silence implies censure and not merely ignorance, David Stewart, the first Secretary of the WEA in NSW, provides the necessary corrective. He wrote:

> It would be impossible to estimate just what the Association [that is, the WEA] owes to the late professor's untiring energy and enthusiasm in the cause of adult education...Mr Atkinson threw himself heart and soul into the task of developing the Tutorial Classes and building up our Association. As a pioneer he had no equal; he travelled from end to end of the State preaching the gospel of the WEA and lecturing on social subjects to every possible type of audience...The Movement in its early days in this country owes a great deal to his vigorous advocacy and his missionary spirit[4].

While no man is on oath in an obituary, Stewart's tribute is all the more impressive since he suffered severely by Atkinson's actions and had no reason to regard him with favour.

Meredith Atkinson was born at Hartlepool in the county of Durham on 3 January 1883 and was educated at Hartlepool Grammar School. From 1902 to 1904 he trained as a teacher at St John's College, University of London at Battersea, completing the intermediate certificate for the BA degree. He entered Keble College, Oxford, as a commoner in 1904 and graduated BA in 1908. While at Oxford his scholastic career was seriously interrupted by the weakness of his eyes which at times were so feeble that he could only read for an hour in each day. The result was that he had to abandon the Honours course upon which he had embarked and to take a pass degree. His tutors had expected him to do well in the Honours school and he was deeply distressed by his failure. In spite of his handicap, he took his pass degree, together with a Diploma in Education, and in 1910 completed the Diploma in Economics and Political Science with distinction.

In later years, Atkinson was to argue that the results he got in his Diploma were the equivalent of the Honours degree he had been unable to complete. He never, however, forgot the misfortune of his Oxford days which had, he said, made him peculiarly dependent on the kindness of his friends[5]. In 1910 he began to lecture for the Extension Delegacy of Oxford and thus made his first venture into adult education.

He was appointed in 1911 to a post in the Tutorial Classes Department of the University of Durham and while there came under the notice of Albert Mansbridge, the founder and first Secretary of the WEA, who thought highly of him as a tutor and who especially valued his zeal for the WEA and for the new concept [illegible] adult education as a joint venture of the universities and the organised working class. I have not found any documentary evidence about Atkinson's work in Durham but it no doubt involved considerable missionary effort on behalf of the WEA and lecturing to tutorial classes in the city and county of Durham. It was his experience there, as well as his appropriate academic background, which stood him in good stead when he applied for the post of 'organiser of tutorial classes and lecturer' in the University of Sydney. This wholly new position was made possible by a special grant of £1000 a year from the Government of NSW to the Senate of the University. It was the first position of the kind in any Australian university.

Atkinson was appointed in October 1913 on the recommendation of Albert Mansbridge. (The first branches of the WEA in Australia were formed in Victoria and in NSW in 1913.) He took up the post early in 1914 in time to convene and attend the first meeting of the Joint Committee for Tutorial Classes, held on 24 April 1914.

It is strange that Atkinson should have left so little mark in the records of Australian adult education. It is difficult, from the very fragmentary evidence, to piece together any kind of portrait of the man. He left, as far as I know, no personal record or memoir of his life and work. I know of only one photograph taken in his adult education days, where he is one of a group at a Federal Conference of the WEA in Adelaide in 1918. This shows him as a small, dapper, intellectual man, evidently not robust but as evidently a genuine personality. From the scanty oral tradition about him it seems that he was an excellent lecturer and public speaker, persuasively eloquent, given to sudden espousing of causes and sudden desertions. It also seems that there were flaws in his personality and character, a certain unreliability and instability which caused his friends uneasiness. G V Portus, who succeeded him as Director of Tutorial Classes in Sydney, says very little about him in his autobiography, *Happy Highways*[6]. Herbert Heaton, Director of Tutorial Classes in the University of Adelaide, who wrote some very interesting recollections about the early days of adult education in Australia for an article in *The Australian Highway*[7], scarcely mentions him, although Heaton and Atkinson must have been personally well acquainted and shared many interests. Their silence may be significant. This is all rather odd, since he was the first Director of Tutorial Classes in Australia, the first president of the WEA and very evidently an energetic and devoted supporter of the organisation. He had, it seemed, scarcely taken up the Sydney appointment when he began to act as a missionary for the cause elsewhere. On 8 May 1914 he lectured to the Melbourne University Association at a meeting held in conjunction with the Victorian WEA and well supported by WEA members. A brief report mentions the 'lecturer's charm of manner and his readiness and spirit in answering questions, his grasp of his subject and enthusiasm for his high mission' and says that this was one of the most notable lectures delivered before the Association[8]. The substance of this address was published in August 1914.

He and Stewart began a two month pioneering trip to New Zealand in January 1915 and it was their efforts which led to the foundation of the WEA in that country. He also edited a series of books published by the WEA which were well used and well regarded in their time.

In spite of tributes to his activity and energy, Armand Bland (Assistant Director to G V Portus in Sydney) writing about the troubles which arose in Melbourne, after Atkinson had resigned from his position there, says categorically that Atkinson was lazy and left the direction and execution of the work of his Department in Melbourne in the hands of the WEA Secretary, S D Thompson[9]. Bland held him responsible for much of the trouble which beset and finally destroyed his successor, J Alexander Gunn.

It is impossible to avoid the impression that Atkinson, in his Sydney period, was a difficult, insecure, thrusting young man, adroit, quite skilled in manipulation of affairs to his own advantage and none too scrupulous. He almost wrecked the infant WEA by his perfervid patriotism and what evidence there is suggests that his relationships with the University were far from happy. It is true that he managed to increase the original grant for his Department from £1000 to £5000 by 1917, secured his own appointment as a lecturer in Economic History at a salary of £160 a year in addition to his Director's salary, obtained a seat on the Faculty of Arts and by some very deft work had his *protégé*, Margaret Collisson, appointed in July 1917 as a full time assistant to himself as organiser of study circles under Extension Board auspices. He justified this anomaly by claiming that the regulations for Extension Board groups were less exacting than those for the work of his own Department! It is little wonder that Professor Todd, Secretary of the Extension Board, and Atkinson were soon on bad terms. Even the patient WEA asked whether organising as such was a proper function of his Department. Miss Collisson did not survive Atkinson's departure. Her appointment, which was initially for one year, was terminated in 1917.

Atkinson's devotion to the WEA, like that of other middle class intellectuals of this period, appears to have arisen from a combination of guilt feeling about the underprivileged working class and a romantic desire to improve their lot by offering them the benefits of a middle class education. He neither understood nor sympathised with the Australian labor movement and his devotion to the WEA did not imply accepting a working class outlook. Radical workers objected to him as a 'capitalist economist' and denied his claim to any genuine association with the working class movement[10].

In the First World War he became an active supporter of the campaign for conscription, acting as a Secretary of the Universal Service League, a body which fought for universal military conscription in Australia. His militant campaigning and pro-Imperial stance resulted in the withdrawing of support for the WEA from the trade unions. In 1915 two unions withdrew, followed in 1917 by seventeen and the Trades Hall Council. Despite the efforts made by the WEA to distinguish between Atkinson the WEA president and Atkinson in his private capacity, a hot gospeller for conscription, the WEA itself was bitterly assailed. In September 1916, Atkinson resigned as president but withdrew his resignation on the motion of David Stewart, the WEA Secretary, who, while recognising the havoc that Atkinson was causing, yet defended his right to freedom of speech and action. It was Stewart, again, who proposed Atkinson as the first president of the Federal WEA for which an executive was constituted in 1917. Rather ironically, by 1922 Atkinson had become a pacifist and said that he then believed that war and violence could achieve nothing but war and violence[11].

He had very little success in the task for which he was engaged, that of organising three year tutorial classes at university level. It quickly became clear that the rank and file members of trade unions were not enthusiastic about this form of education. Nor did it make any great appeal to the middle class students who had in the past frequented Extension lectures. Nobody, in fact, seemed to want to undertake serious study for a prolonged period, to do written work to the satisfaction of tutors and to ask for no reward; for the few who stayed the course were given no recognition, no diploma, no letters to put after their names. Atkinson soon found himself in charge of a department which had very few students, if the rules were rigorously applied. He was uneasily aware of his insecure position in the University and willing to look abroad for other worlds to conquer.

Opportunity for a change of scene, if not a new world, came from Melbourne. Although among the first to welcome the idea of university-trade union cooperation, the University of Melbourne was slow to move in the matter of setting up a Tutorial Classes Department and slower still to appoint a Director. The principal problem was finance.

Repeated applications to the Victorian Government for funds to establish a Department and to pay a Director were rejected. A promise of support was made in 1916 but withdrawn soon after it was given and it was not until 1917 that a grant of £1000 a year for three years was notified to the Council, with an implied promise that after the three year period the grant would be raised to £1500.

In view of the Government promise in 1916, Professor Harrison Moore, Dean of the Faculty of Law and president of the WEA in Victoria, began negotiations with Atkinson to induce him to come to Victoria to head the proposed new Department. The plan was abandoned in 1916 in view of the financial difficulty, but was actively prosecuted in 1917. Moore was a very skilful and influential supporter and it was soon agreed that if the new position were to be established, Atkinson would be invited to accept it. The bait offered was a small increase in salary, but more importantly, Melbourne was prepared to grant what Atkinson most coveted, a substantial upgrading of status. It proposed that the Director of Tutorial Classes should be entitled to the rank of a full professor of the University, with a seat on the Professorial Board. Atkinson, for his part, made it clear that he would not come on any other terms. There was surprisingly little resistance to Moore's proposal in Melbourne: the only objection seems to have been raised by John MacFarland, Master of Ormond College and Vice-Chancellor in 1917. Writing to Harrison Moore, MacFarland says that he does not favour giving Atkinson the title of professor, lest it should give him a claim on any chair of Economics which might be established[12].

In spite of MacFarland's objection, Moore carried his plan through and the offer was made to Atkinson and accepted by him on 20 November 1917. His letter accepting the offer was sent from the home address of S D Thompson, the WEA Secretary in Tasmania, who was appointed Secretary of the WEA in Melbourne by Atkinson soon after he took up the Melbourne position in 1918.

It may be significant of the University of Sydney attitude to Atkinson that the Senate raised no objections whatever to his transfer to Melbourne. Some misgivings about what the Senate reaction to this manifest poaching might be were held in Melbourne and it was decided to make a discreet attempt to find out. The enquiry was made: there were no objections.

Although Atkinson, ever conscious of status and seeking recognition, appears to have been signally successful in his move to Melbourne, his triumph was more imaginary than real. It is a curious fact that in contemporary University calendars he is never listed among the professors, but occupies a little niche of his own at the end of the list as Director of Tutorial Classes. Nor has the University ever subsequently recognised his status. Neither his name, nor that of J A Gunn, appears in later lists of those who held chairs in the University. Nor does his name appear in Sir Ernest Scott's history of the University.

His career in Melbourne was brief and disastrous. One of his first follies was to reconstruct the machinery for the extra-mural work of the University by amalgamating the Extension Board and the Tutorial Classes Department and by abolishing the Joint Committee. On the new Board, the WEA was given a preponderate weight and the Secretary of the WEA became the Secretary of the Board. These were blunders which his unfortunate successor, J A Gunn, fought for years to correct, but without success. Atkinson lectured on Sociology instead of Economic History (as in Sydney) and at least one critical undergraduate thought very ill of his course. Keith Hancock wrote:

> What I did not so much relish was the pretentious mumbo jumbo that was called sociology. A young historian today would be offered under this heading something coherent and scholarly; but we were offered second-hand fact, disputable generalizations and a pretentious vocabulary. I am glad to say that we rejected them all; but I wish that we could have given to the history of science the time that we wasted on this pseudo-sociological jumble[13].

He was no more successful in building up the three year tutorial classes in Melbourne than he had been in Sydney. As in Sydney, there was neither interest nor support from the organised labor movement. Atkinson was not loved by his colleagues, who for the most part ignored him. His domestic life at this time seems to have become seriously disturbed, his few friends being most sympathetic with his wife as an injured party, and not failing to censure him. He was also involved, I think innocently, in an unsavoury business affair in which he seems to have been a dupe. He was the front man for a set of business men and his prestige and position were used to induce people to invest money in a highly doubtful company, Quick Gears Pty Ltd. On 5 December 1921 he, with Sir James Barrett and others, gave parcels of his shares in the company as a gift to the University. They were worthless.

The combined weight of these troubles and some uncertainty about his general health led him to ask for leave to go abroad from August 1921 until April 1922. This was granted on favourable terms. It is noteworthy that on this voyage he visited Russia—a very unusual journey for an academic to undertake at that time. He resigned from his university post as from 31 May 1922 and his resignation was accepted with a terse 'received with regret'. He thereupon took a position as editor of *Stead's Review*.

He had shown by earlier efforts that he was a good editor of books, if not of periodicals. He made a considerable success of the books he edited for the WEA, *Trade Unionism in Australia* (1915) and *New Social Order, Post War Reconstruction* (1919), which were very useful in their day. His greatest success came in 1920 when he edited *Australia: Economic and Political Studies*, which is rightly described in the preface as 'the first comprehensive and authoritative work on the sociological and economic conditions of Australia yet to be published'[14]. He contributed the lead article to this book, an essay on the Australian outlook.

His skill and flair are shown by the brilliant array of talented writers he induced to contribute. Their names are like an honour roll of academic Australia of the time and many of the essays still repay reading. He obtained substantial contributions from Harrison Moore, Elton Mayo, G V Portus, Jethro Brown, Griffith Taylor, Herbert Heaton, G Arnold Wood and G Knibbs along with other notables. It is quite possible that the success of the book and his original and valuable part in collecting and editing it was the main factor in his selection as editor for *Stead's Review*.

That lively periodical began publication in Melbourne in 1892 as the *Review of Reviews for Australia*. It changed name and format in 1914 and was thereafter known as *Stead's Review*. After 1914 it was edited by Henry Stead, son of the famous founder W T Stead, who lost his life in the *Titanic*. Henry Stead died in December 1921, and Atkinson was chosen to succeed him. This announcement was made in the March 1922 issue which carries a full page photograph of Atkinson.

The first issue for which he was wholly responsible was that of May 1922. He was the editor until the November issue of 1924, when his name was abruptly dropped. His comments on International Affairs, 'Progress of the World' continued to appear over his name until April 1925 but that column in the May issue was unsigned. In the June issue there was a somewhat bald announcement that after the publication of the May issue Atkinson had left for Europe, visiting the Far East and America on behalf of the Save the Children and Famine Relief Fund. He had begun to lecture for the Fund in Australia in 1924, but whether he embarked on this work while still editor of *Stead's Review* or only on leaving the editorial chair I am not certain.

It was in his capacity as lecturer and fund raiser that he upset one of his former colleagues in university adult education, by advertising his lectures for the Fund as if he still had an active association with both university and WEA. B H Molesworth, Director of Tutorial Classes in Queensland, wrote to G V Portus to protest. Portus' reply is illuminating. He says:

> All Atkinson's Melbourne ventures have gone futt. He assumes that he is lecturing for the children's charity only to get a living. You may be quite sure that he will do this sort of thing to the end of the chapter. I have warned him against it before now and one of the reasons for his failure here has been his persistence in the easy assumption of titles which he ought not to arrogate to himself[15].

I have not come across other instances of this Atkinsonian weakness which might serve to amplify the statement by Portus, though it is just possible that the brief entry on Atkinson in Fred John's *Who's Who in Australia 1922* may be significant. Here Atkinson is stated to be 'Director of Tutorial Classes with the rank of professor and Dean of a Faculty, University of Melbourne'. The insistence on rank and title, although quite accurate here, strikes one as being oddly self glorifying.

He left Australia in May 1925 to become Secretary of the New Health Society in England. He also lectured for the Extra Mural Delegacy, Cambridge. He died on 14 May 1929. His death was briefly noticed by David Stewart[16] and there was no other tribute to him.

Was there a fatal flaw of character or training which led to the miserable failure of Atkinson's Australian period? Would his career have been different, more brilliant, more rewarding to himself and to others if he had never left England? Was there something in the Australian set-up which led to catastrophe for Atkinson and his Melbourne successor J A Gunn, both men of genuine ability and talent, yet who seemed quite unable to work happily here. Idle questions. While it is easy to point out the defects in Atkinson's character, it is not at all easy to be sure that these were not emphasised if indeed not produced by the circumstances of his work in Sydney and Melbourne.

My suspicion is that Atkinson really wanted to be an academic teacher and that his adult education work was unsatisfying and psychologically disturbing. He appeared to have an exalted position, but in fact he had no real part in the university and was possibly made to feel this by his colleagues. Concentration on the multifarious tasks of the Tutorial Classes Department soon eroded his scholarship and return to full university teaching was therefore not an option, since it would have involved a serious reduction in both status and salary and he was always dogged by his Oxford pass degree. He lived in fact in a world in which nothing was quite what it seemed, with a WEA which had little or nothing to do with workers' education, with university tutorial classes which were not at anything like university standard, with the title and status of a professor yet having nothing to profess. Few men can stand the strain of living for long in a fantasy world and Atkinson may well have broken under that strain.

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1 An edited version of this paper was published in the *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, vol. 18, no. 2, July 1978, pp. 16–22.

2 D Whitelock, *The Great Tradition: A History of Adult Education in Australia*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1974, ch. 6.

3 *ibid.*, p. 177

4 'Vale Professor Meredith Atkinson', *The Australian Highway*, vol. xi, no. 9, 10 June 1929, p. 157.

5 Atkinson to Harrison Moore, 20 December 1916, Tutorial Classes Records, University of Melbourne.

6 G V Portus, *Happy Highways*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1953.

7 Herbert Heaton, 'Personalities, 1913–1922', *The Australian Highway*, vol. 34, no. 2, May 1952, pp. ii & iv, (reprinted from the issue of October 1923).

8 Melbourne University *Review*, vols 1 & 2, 1914, p. 8.

9 Armand Bland to G V Portus and Herbert Heaton, letter headed 'Glenbrook, 28 May 1927', Tutorial Classes Department Records, University of Sydney. See also the extracts in the Postscript to the following paper on J Alexander Gunn, pp. 15–16.

10 *Socialist*, Melbourne, 28 September 1920.

11 *The Commonweal*, Melbourne, vol. 30, no. 3, 1 November 1922, p. 9.

12 MacFarland to Moore, 19 October 1917, Tutorial Classes Department Records, University of Melbourne.

13 W K Hancock, *Country and Calling*, Faber & Faber, London, 1954, p. 70.

14 *Australia, Economic and Political Studies*, by various writers, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1920, p. v.

15 G V Portus to B H Molesworth, 29 September 1924, Tutorial Classes Department Records, University of Sydney.

16 For Stewart's obituary see fn. 4. His first wife, Margaret Atkinson (*née* Freeland) died in 1924 before he left for England and was buried at Mt Macedon. There were three children of the marriage: Meredith, Dorothy and Denis. He was also survived by his second wife, Isobel Marion, whom he married in Melbourne on 21 March 1925.

JOHN ALEXANDER GUNN

AN ADULT EDUCATION TRAGEDY

◆

Director of Extension
University of Melbourne, 1923–1938

On a bleak early winter Melbourne morning, the second of June 1975 at 9.50 a.m., I attended the funeral of the late John Alexander Gunn, MA, BSc, PhD, Director of Extension at the University of Melbourne 1923–1938, philosopher, psychologist, economist, author. He died on 29 May at Farnham Court Home for old people, St Kilda. We were a very small company at the funeral in the big chapel: four mourners, one funeral parlour attendant and a chaplain. The principal mourner was one of the administrators of the home where Gunn lived for five or six years before his death. He was accompanied by two rather decrepit old men from the same institution who might have come from Trollope's Hiram's Hospital. They seemed slightly bewildered since they did not know Gunn and had been brought along only to make up some kind of congregation. Gunn had no relatives and no friends. The chaplain had been badly briefed; he knew nothing whatever about 'the deceased', as he kept on calling the unheeding corpse, and not even once did he get his name right. It was 'John Alexander' he prayed for and committed to the flames and never John Alexander Gunn[1].

The administrator told me after the ceremony that the University of Melbourne had paid for the funeral; otherwise it must have been a totally unremarked interment for poor Gunn, who was penniless. I felt rather better to think that we were giving him a respectable send-off but I wished that there had been just a few more people present and some who knew and remembered Gunn and who perhaps thought of him with kindness. But there was no one except those mentioned and I thought I had really no right to be there since I scarcely knew him. I simply succeeded him as Director of Extension in 1939 after he had been virtually dismissed from the University in the previous year.

Gunn's name, I suppose, is quite unknown in adult education circles today and the tragic story of his life in Melbourne is preserved only in part in an unpublished thesis by Alfred Wesson[2]. The one slight memorial to him which I know is on a large office desk in the Council of Adult Education (CAE) in Melbourne which has on it several small plaques which read: 'Meredith Atkinson slept here'; 'J Alexander Gunn slept here'; 'C R Badger slept here'. The desk came from the University of Melbourne and was used in turn by the three Directors of Extension at that University. It passed to the CAE when the Extension Board was wound up in 1947. It is curious to reflect that these three men, two of them very able and academically distinguished, found the difficulties of the Extension job almost insuperable. Meredith Atkinson resigned under something of a cloud, J A Gunn was dismissed and I resigned. I was more fortunate than the others in that whereas their post-university lives were very miserable, I found a challenging and satisfying career as the Director of Adult Education in Victoria.

John Alexander Gunn was born in Liverpool on 2 April 1896, the son of James Gunn of Caithness, Scotland. He was educated at Oulton School, Liverpool, and proceeded by scholarship to the University of Liverpool where he read for the Honours degree in Classical Literature and Philosophy. His academic career was interrupted by the 1914–18 war. He enlisted in 1916 and served with the French army, returning to Liverpool after discharge in 1918 to take a brilliant first in Classical History and Philosophy with several prizes and distinctions. In 1921 he was appointed Tutor in Philosophy and undertook extension and tutorial class work for the University. He spent a year at the Sorbonne as a research scholar; his first book, the result of his work there and his PhD thesis, *Bergson and his Philosophy*, was published in 1920[3], followed by *Modern French Philosophy* in 1922[4]. Late in 1922 two tempting positions were available to him. He was offered the chair of Philosophy at Witwatersrand University, Johannesburg, South Africa, and at the same time, largely through the good offices of A L Smith, Master of Balliol and well-known supporter of the WEA, the post of Director of Extension at the University of Melbourne. This latter position carried a salary of £1,000 a year, the rank and title of professor of the University and a seat on the Professorial Board. Gunn elected to come to Melbourne and took up his position as Director in March 1923. Some of his best academic work was done after he came to Melbourne for he published a book on Spinoza in 1925[5] and his important work, *The Problem of Time*, in 1929[6]. He wrote articles for the philosophical journal *The Monist* as well as for the *Australian Journal of Psychology and Philosophy*. He was a good and lucid lecturer, an excellent linguist and earned the respect of many distinguished men for his scholarship.

I find it impossible to imagine what Gunn was like when he first came to Melbourne. When I met him in 1939 he was a broken man soured by failure, suffering from a sense of having been very badly treated. His personal appearance was not prepossessing. He was a small man, thin, wiry, active and aggressive. My impression of him was most unfavourable since, as soon as we met, he poured out to me all his pent-up hatred and bitterness about the University and especially about the WEA. I found it difficult to follow his tirade, impossible to stop it, and while I felt extremely sorry for him, I took good care to avoid him in future. He was much disliked at the University: some of his colleagues found him prickly, self-assertive, opinionated and incompetent.

There was, however, very clearly another side to him. Rudolf Bronner, his Assistant Director, worked happily with him and gave him consistent support. His secretary, Norah Strahan, who became my secretary in 1939, regarded him highly and she was a woman of fine character and sound judgement. For many years he acted as Recorder to the Melbourne Beefsteak Club, a dining and discussion club for medical, legal and university people, a little like the Boobook Club. One or two WEA people thought well of him and admired his lectures and his brilliance but they were very much a minority.

An odd facet of his character and one that made for trouble was his inability to manage his personal affairs. In spite of his professorial salary, Gunn was almost always financially embarrassed. He had no obvious vices, did not gamble, was no drunkard, lived very modestly in a rented flat and was childless. Yet he was constantly obliged to push his claims for a few pounds here and a few pounds there and made very bad friends by borrowing money and then failing to pay his debts. He was even forced by his needs to borrow money from his secretary, Norah Strahan, and from L T Leathley, his one real friend in the WEA.

The tragic flaw in his character and that which led to his downfall, I suppose, was his intellectual arrogance. Gunn was and knew himself to be a very able man. Perhaps as a consequence he tended to despise those who lacked his special gifts of rapid assimilation of fact and his powers of deductive reasoning. He thought that his brilliance demanded and should naturally command a corresponding obeisance from lesser intelligences; that it was for him to call the tune and for others to dance it. He met university colleagues in Melbourne who denied his claims to intellectual superiority and who held positions of greater authority and prestige than his own. He also met inferiors who were blankly unaware of his abilities. As A G Dickens has observed of another, his was 'the tragedy of the doctrinaire called to practical leadership, yet lacking that instinct toward human beings, that sense of the possible in a real world, which have always proved more useful...than high principles and strict logic based on narrow premises'[7].

Gunn's character apart, all the cards were stacked against him well before he came to Melbourne and he would have needed great wisdom, personal powers of persuasion, an instinct for making correct assessments and decisions, to have succeeded. Most of these attributes he lacked and a road to ruin had been effectively laid out for him by his predecessor, Meredith Atkinson. Atkinson had left Sydney after many troubles because the University refused to give him a professorship. Melbourne, largely at the urging of Sir James Barrett, founder and perpetual patron of the Victorian WEA, and Sir Harrison Moore, the influential Professor of Law, was eager to have him on any terms and he was invited to accept the directorship. His letter accepting the offer came from Hobart where he was staying with the Secretary of the WEA in Tasmania, S D Thompson. Among his first actions in Melbourne was to arrange for Thompson's appointment as Secretary of the Victorian WEA at a salary of £260 a year paid by the University. Nobody asked why Atkinson, an officer of the University, busied himself about appointing a Secretary for a voluntary association whose internal arrangements were no business of his or of the University. Nor were any questions asked about the propriety of the appointment while the Honorary Secretary of the association, L T Leathley, was on active service abroad.

When Atkinson arrived in Melbourne, he was responsible for the operation of both the University Extension Board, founded in 1892, and the Joint Committee for Tutorial Classes (1914). The University Council had laid down quite firmly in 1913 that '"any organisation outside the University" could ask for what were to be known as "Tutorial Classes" and assist in the management of them by means of a joint committee with the Extension Board"[8]. Within the first year of that decision, there was only one Joint Committee for Tutorial Classes, that with the WEA. By 1921, thanks to Atkinson's stupidity, the WEA members had come to dominate the Extension Board itself. Arguing that the continuation of the Extension Board and the Joint Committee for Tutorial Classes was 'costly and cumbersome', Atkinson brought about an amalgamation of the two in a new statute which provided for a Board of twenty-two: eleven from the WEA, two from the University Council, six from the full-time teaching staff of the University nominated by the Professorial Board, and three appointed by the University Council after consultation with the Board itself—that is, virtually coopted members. The chairman was the Director: the Secretary was the Secretary of the WEA.

By this piece of folly the University lost control over its Extension work and gave the WEA a privileged place which it was quick to exploit and zealous to defend. The academic members of the Board rarely attended. The WEA members were always present. The cooption power added to the WEA strength. The chairman was in no position to defend or impose any policy not sanctioned by the WEA which had not only control of the executive machinery in the hands of the Secretary but had as well a network of friends and supporters in the University itself. It had, especially, the important support and encouragement of Barrett and Moore.

It is ironical and tragic that this situation should have come about just when any candid and objective survey of the facts would have suggested that it was time to write off the WEA experiment as a failure and to think again about an adult education policy suited to the needs of Victoria. By 1921 the classes organised by the WEA had ceased in any way to resemble the rigorous three year courses demanded by theory. The WEA had lost any contact with or support from the organised working class movement. In 1917 the Victorian Labor College was founded: in 1922 the Trades Hall Council withdrew its support from the WEA. Commonsense demanded that the WEA should therefore be wound up and give place to a more effective organisation. It was an experiment which had failed. Commonsense, of course, was not heard. Instead, Atkinson faded from the scene, his early popularity in Melbourne tarnished by scandal in 1921. In 1922 he resigned, leaving his assistant, Rudolf Bronner, to carry on in his uneasy chair until Gunn arrived in March 1923.

It was the institutional muddle created by Atkinson which led to an almost immediate and hostile confrontation between J A Gunn and S D Thompson, to an intolerable series of petty quarrels between the two men, and to Gunn's ruin. I do not believe that temperamental differences between the two men were the major cause of the trouble. Given the circumstances, their quarrel was inevitable.

Gunn recognised quite clearly what Atkinson had failed to see: that the WEA, without any base in the working-class movement, without support from the Trades Hall, and having abandoned any pretence of organising three year tutorial classes, had become parasitic on the University. He wanted the Extension Board to take its own independent line in adult education, leaving the WEA to do whatever it liked but forbidding it any claim to interfere in Extension policy. He showed considerable energy and skill in the kinds of schemes he developed for Extension—vacation schools, University Weeks, correspondence courses, public lectures. His proposals were doggedly opposed by the WEA representatives on the Board and since those which were accepted could only be implemented by Thompson they were not spectacularly successful. The WEA wanted nothing but evening classes in which they had a vested interest. Gunn had far wider plans and visions.

The lines of battle were drawn within a few months of Gunn's arrival. The WEA, and especially its Secretary, recognised that if Gunn got his way and made an effective Extension programme independent of the WEA, their day of power and influence was over. Equally Gunn recognised that if he failed to assert his independence he would be a permanent captive. Having discovered just how unworkable the system devised by Atkinson was, he determined to alter it. He presented a report to the University Council in July 1924, ignoring the Extension Board, and asked for reform. This was to consist in the setting up of special machinery to deal with tutorial classes and a new kind of Extension Board, predominantly University but with two representatives from the Education Department and two from the WEA. Gunn coupled these entirely sensible proposals with a scathing attack on Thompson.

> It must be said that the existing constitution has never had a fair trial owing to the attitude of the

> Secretary which is one of declared hostility to the University, lack of straightforward dealing, and of definite disloyalty to the fundamental principles of the work. If the present constitution, or indeed any constitution is to work at all, attention must be directed to the personal qualifications of the Secretary. If adult education under the University or under the WEA is to make any progress in Victoria, the present Secretary's tenure of office must end at once, that is, with the expiry of tenure on August 1'.

As far as I can ascertain, the University Council ignored this report and it seems never to have come before it. Instead, the bombshell exploded at a meeting of the Extension Board held on 28 July 1924. This meeting decided to set up a committee of enquiry and invited Mr Justice Schutt, a judge of the Supreme Court, to act as chairman to ensure impartiality. Almost every other member was sympathetic towards Thompson. By a tactical masterstroke, E J Ingram, one of Gunn's most implacable opponents, moved that the enquiry should be concerned with the charges against Thompson, with the administration of the Board and tutorial classes, with the duties of the Assistant Director and such matters. Gunn's proposals for reform were excluded and were never discussed. With such a committee and with such terms of reference, the finding of the enquiry was predictable. Gunn, himself, and his Assistant came in for a good deal of criticism. The principal recommendation was that there should be more frequent consultation and fuller cooperation between the Director and the WEA officials. Gunn was made to unsay his charges against Thompson: his plan for reform of the Board was ignored. The WEA victory was complete. Gunn's self-confidence was badly shaken and he drew back from any further immediate attempt to reform the Board and to put the WEA in its place.

In my opinion Gunn should never have accepted the findings of the enquiry committee which were, in effect, a vote of censure on him pronounced by a far-from-impartial tribunal. He should immediately have tendered his resignation to the University or made it a condition of continuing as Director of Extension that his proposed reforms should be adopted. In the circumstances, had the matter come in this way directly before the University Council, I doubt if his resignation could have been accepted. Even if it had, he was young, highly qualified and the world was wide. Accepting such a humiliating defeat at the hands of his enemies in the WEA condemned him to fifteen years of failure and final collapse.

My sympathies in the case at this time lie wholly with Gunn, but I do not, for all that, see Thompson as the villain of the piece. Blame and responsibility really belong to the University which, by accepting Atkinson's foolish proposals, placed Gunn in an impossible position and then refused to extricate him from the muddle by ignoring his sensible proposals for reform. He was appointed to a job and refused the means to execute it—and then was blamed for his lack of success. The University authorities thereafter averted their eyes from the real problem and talked about a clash of personalities.

From 1924 onwards there was certainly a clash of personalities, not only between Gunn and Thompson, who were bitter enemies, but between Gunn and the leading figures of the WEA. University opinion on the whole leaned to Thompson's side for he was a very mild, inoffensive, smooth man, very deferential to all university professors. Gunn's account of him as a villainous schemer was not widely credited. He himself was truculent and off-handed, becoming more and more tiresome as he brooded over his grievances and as the bitterness of unjust treatment burnt within him. He might well have said with the Psalmist, 'Woe is me that I am constrained to dwell with Mesech and to have my habitation among the tents of Kedar…I labour for peace but when I speak unto them thereof they make them ready for battle'.

In 1927 there seemed to be at least a chance that reform along the lines urged by Gunn might be undertaken. The WEA majority on the Extension Board asked the University Council to abolish the post of Assistant Director and to end Rudolf Bronner's appointment on 28 February 1927. This would have meant that Gunn thereupon became totally dependent on Thompson for all organising work. The request was made on the plea of economy and went to the University Council on 6 December 1926. For once the Council took a strong line, refusing to act without full enquiry. It set up its own committee headed by the Chancellor and placed on it some of the most able and clear-sighted members of the Council. The result was an excellent report which went over the whole ground and proposed reforms in the Extension statute. The committee was by no means impressed by the WEA, pointing out that its alleged large membership was artificially swollen and that it really had at the utmost a membership of fifty. It remarked on the unwisdom of allowing any university Board to be dominated by non-university members and upheld strongly the importance of Extension as a university function and the need for it to function independently.

Most of the reforms proposed by the enquiry committee were embodied in the 1927 statute. The new Extension Board consisted of the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor and Director of University Extension, together with fifteen others appointed by the Council. Eight, of whom six would be members of the teaching staff, were to represent the University; four—the committee proposed three—were to be from the WEA; two were to be nominated by the Trades Hall Council; and one coopted member only was allowed. The Board was to elect its own chairman and the Secretary was to be the Registrar of the University and no longer the Secretary of the WEA. The Board was empowered to appoint an executive—only one member from the WEA—and a Tutorial Classes Committee with a predominance of university members. On paper that statute was excellent and embodied almost all that Gunn had wanted in 1924. It came into force in 1928.

There was, however, one catch. The committee finally agreed to abolish the post of Assistant Director but thought that another officer, an organising tutor, should be appointed. Bronner left the University in 1927 but, since times were hard, was not replaced. Gunn was then still wholly dependent on Thompson who, though no longer Secretary of the Board, was the only official who could execute the Board's policy, apart from Gunn himself. It was soon apparent that though the WEA members were no longer in the majority they had great influence, for it was hard to get University members to attend and not all, in any case, supported Gunn. Reform had come too late and the endemic bitterness of Director and WEA Secretary made even good machinery unworkable.

Subsequent years were full of trouble and the University Council and staff became more and more impatient. It seemed that no amount of tinkering could improve matters. In 1935 following further representations to the Council by Gunn, Sir Raymond Priestley (the then Vice-Chancellor) set up a committee of enquiry of which he became chairman. It reported to the Council in 1937 and its recommendations, immediately accepted by the Council, put an end to Gunn's university career. The principal recommendation was that, at the end of his current five year term, the Extension post should be advertised. A new salary of £750 a year was agreed upon and the new Director was not to be styled professor nor to have a seat on the Professorial Board. Applications under these terms were called for in 1938 and I was appointed as Director and took up my post in March 1939. It is strange that, though Gunn was virtually dismissed, University opinion by 1938 had swung heavily against the WEA. The candidate the WEA most favoured for the position, and for whom it lobbied strenuously, received only two votes in the Council ballot whereas I, who was strongly opposed by the WEA, gained all the rest.

Gunn was given some part-time lecturing in Psychology but he did this so perfunctorily that the new Vice-Chancellor, John Medley, was soon forced to reprimand and finally to dismiss him. He had lost all contact with the University by the end of 1939 and never succeeded in obtaining any academic work elsewhere. On the few occasions I saw him after that time he looked a shabby, seedy, pitiful wreck. When his wife, who worked to support him after he left the University, died, he seems to have been reduced to real poverty and to isolation and intellectual darkness. I have seen a little of what he wrote at this time and it touches the heart with pity for the man who had written so much and so well in better days.

His story has a moral but I do not want to draw it. At one time in my life, in 1946, when I faced the fact of failure in my own work as Director of Extension in Melbourne and tendered my resignation, the tragic figure of J Alexander Gunn was much in my mind. He haunted me for many years. I am glad his unquiet spirit rests. *Vale.*

Postscript

A letter from Armand Bland, Assistant Director of Tutorial Classes, University of Sydney, addressed to G V Portus, Director of Tutorial Classes in that university and to Herbert Heaton, who held the corresponding position in the University of Adelaide, dated 28 May 1927, gives a vivid picture of the situation in Melbourne in that year[10].

The context of the letter is a meeting of the Federal Council of the WEA held in Melbourne in May 1927. The Federal Council normally comprised a committee consisting of the Director of Tutorial Classes and the Secretary of the WEA from each state. The president of the WEA in the host state was generally present and occasionally other office bearers or members of Extension staff. The Victorian WEA excluded the Director and Assistant Director from the Council and appointed the Secretary, president and vice president of the WEA. Bland wrote:

> Now let me turn to the Vic[torian] problem. The main question which affected the Council was the proposal that the Melbourne University should approve the Secretary of the WEA. When we got there

> we found the situation somewhat changed, and the solution agreed was that the University and the WEA should have equal representation in the selection, but that the WEA should appoint. As a compromise the University agreed that equal representatives should select the Director of Tutorial Classes, tat [sic] the Sec[retary] of the WEA should be Sec of the Joint Committee and that the WEA, should be *solely* responsible for the organization of Tutorial Classes.
>
> Let me try to give you some idea of the Vic Position. Gunn you will remember was not the selection of Thompson. He wanted Herbert[11] and failing him, Copie[12]; Leathley[13] was the WEA representative who voted with the University rep[resentative]s to get Gunn. Therefore Thompson started off antagonistic to Gunn and at the first opportunity shunted Leathley who is not now a member of the WEA. Gunn knew nothing of what a Director ought to do, is slovenly in his administration, and very interested in Philosophy. His own incompetent administration was not helped by Thompson's ineptitude, and in 1923? he wrote a private memo to the University Council urging Thompson's sack. Thommie got off at the inquiry because the University people did not know what to look for and Gunn did not know how to present his case. That sealed Gunn's doom. Ever since then Thommie has been on his track. Thommie wants complete control of the Tutorial Classes. He fixes what classes shall be run, he gets them, he fixes their place abd [sic] time of meeting, what Tutors shall be appointed, inspects the classes selects the libraries with the Tutors, collects the rolls, and in short does everything that a Director should do...when Gunn or Bronner[14] have got a class, Thommie gets the Committee of the University B[oar]d to disapprove. They blame him for not attending social gatherings and when he does come, they snub him.

In May 1927, the University Council considered a series of proposals from the WEA. The main request was that Rudolf Bronner should be removed as Assistant Director, on the grounds of economy. Bland continues:

> These [requests] come before the Council next Monday and it is expected by the WEA that the Uni[versity] Council will fire Gunn and Bronner...The people [WEA] are so satisfied that Gunn and Bronner will be fired that I was approached by several to apply...The only person who can hold the position is one who is friendly to Thommie, but how long that friendship would endure when the Director asserted himself is problematical...Thommie was confident on the Monday that he would be able to appoint me. Indeed he and Copie both assured me on that score, and Thommie said that I knew somthing [sic] of his capacity to get his end. I did, but after I had raked Thommie over every day and every night for a week he was not so confident that I would be in his pocket and he hazarded approaching you Herbert. So there you are, only I warn you that I shall apply, if the chance occurs, and that if I get it I shall give Thommie an idea of how a man acts when he knows what to do. He has had it all his own way because Atkinson was lazy and let Thommie do things, Bronner was lazy and did not know what to do, Gunn was if not lazy, a muddler and entirely igorant [sic] of what he ought to do.

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[1] This paper was originally published in the *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, vol. xv, no. 3, November 1975, pp. 116–22. The Postscript was written subsequently.

[2] A Wesson, Formal adult education in Victoria 1890–1950, MEd thesis, University of Melbourne, 1971.

[3] J Alexander Gunn, *Bergson and his Philosophy*, E P Dutton & Co., New York, 1920.

[4] Gunn, *Modern French Philosophy: A Study of Development since Comte*, (with a Foreword by Henri Bergson), T Fisher Unwin Ltd, London, 1922.

[5] Gunn, *Benedict Spinoza*, Macmillan in association with Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1925.

[6] Gunn, *The Problem of Time: An Historical and Critical Study*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1929.

[7] A G Dickens, *The English Reformation*, Fontana Paperbacks, 1967, p. 385.

[8] Wesson, p. 88.

[9] Gunn's report to the University Council is pasted in the *Minutes* of the University Extension Board, July 1924. See Wesson, *op. cit.*, pp. 159–60.

[10] Letter headed 'Glenbrook, 28 May 1927', from Armand Bland to G V Portus and Herbert Heaton who were then both overseas. The original is in the archives of the Tutorial Classes Department, University of Sydney.

[11] Herbert Heaton, Director of Tutorial Classes, University of Adelaide.

[12] Douglas, later Sir Douglas, Copland, Professor of Economics, University of Melbourne and previously Director of Tutorial Classes, University of Tasmania.

[13] Loftus Leathley was the first Honorary Secretary of the WEA in Victoria.

[14] Rudolf Bronner, Assistant Director of Tutorial Classes, University of Melbourne, and later Controller, Schools' Broadcasts, ABC, Sydney.

C R BADGER

The Third and Last Director of University Extension
University of Melbourne, 1939–1947

As I have written accounts of Meredith Atkinson, the first Director of Tutorial Classes in the University of Melbourne and of his successor, J A Gunn (who was styled Director of Extension), it seems not inappropriate that I should complete the series by giving some account of myself since I was Gunn's successor and the last person to hold this office. It is too early to attempt a critical assessment of my work for and influence on Australian adult education, nor am I the one to make such an assessment. That must wait until a detached and scholarly historian of adult education in Australia emerges. The segment of my career, however, which lies between 1939 and 1947, the years of my tenure of the Extension office in Melbourne and the years in which I planned and carried out the changes which made me the last of the line, is now remote enough in time and sufficiently well documented to be worth examining.

Atkinson, Gunn and I each in our own way failed to make a successful career in the University of Melbourne in what may be broadly called University Adult Education. Atkinson resigned, Gunn was virtually dismissed, I removed myself from the University and in leaving extinguished the office I held. That we left was the only thing we had in common. In all other respects, we differed as widely as we very well could, with quite different temperaments, education, interests and abilities.

The third Director, I was born on 4 December 1906, in the unprepossessing town of Peterborough, in the semi-arid mid-north of South Australia. My father, a small town shopkeeper, failed in business after the 1914 drought and moved from Peterborough to Adelaide in 1916. He became a shop assistant, struggling to keep a large family and to pay off heavy debts. I went to a State school at Mitcham, had one year of secondary education and thereafter was employed as a message boy, then in a bookshop and finally in 1923, by what proved to be a wonderful stroke of good fortune, as a laboratory attendant in the Chemistry Department of the University of Adelaide. The salary was only ten shillings per week, but laboratory attendants could enrol in University courses without paying fees and most of them were working their way towards degrees. My only educational achievement to that date was a pass in Intermediate English and Chemistry. I was not properly equipped to begin on any academic work, but I nevertheless entered for a number of diverse subjects in 1924, choosing topics almost at random, without thought of proceeding to a degree. I did well enough in the examinations for the University authorities to encourage me to undertake the combined Honours course in English and Philosophy. They offered to allow me to compensate for the lack of matriculation by some alternatives. I was also given a better paid post in the University Library.

Soon after this I entered briefly on a course of training for the Baptist ministry, but this, for me, unlikely ecclesiastical career was soon abandoned. I next came under the influence of W K Hancock, who was Professor of History in the University of Adelaide from 1924 until 1933, and under his guidance read for the Honours degree in History and Philosophy and obtained first class Honours, winning the Tinline Scholarship. I had neglected, however, to comply with the requirements laid down for matriculation and did not do this until 1936. The formal absence of a degree did not prevent my enrolling at the London School of Economics in 1934 where I began a thesis on the Italian Parliamentary System, which involved spending a considerable time in Italy. Lack of funds drove me back to Adelaide in 1935.

I had begun to work in adult education in 1931 as a tutor for a study circle and, becoming more and more interested, determined to make a career if I could find a suitable job. Opportunity came in 1936, when I was offered the post of Reader's Counsellor in the University of Western Australia. In 1937 I was appointed Director of Adult Education in the University, the first full time Director there.

My work in WA prospered and I was a respected member of the University community.

Success there brought me to notice elsewhere, so that when I came to apply for the position of Director of University Extension in the University of Melbourne I was already known as a potential leader. My appointment in Melbourne, however, was bitterly opposed by the Victorian Workers' Educational Association which wanted Dr G S Plant, a young Melbourne graduate and warm friend and supporter of the WEA, as Director. In the event, the selection committee, with an equal number of University and WEA representatives, was deadlocked and asked the University Council itself to choose between us. I was chosen and came to Melbourne in March 1939.

The prospect before me was bleak. Like my predecessor, J Alexander Gunn, I had been appointed against the wish of the WEA and of its formidable and influential Secretary, S D Thompson. I was therefore regarded with suspicion by the WEA. Nor was there much active support to be expected within the University. The Chancellor, Sir James Barrett, and the Professor of Economics, D B Copland, who was influential in University circles, were firm friends and supporters of S D Thompson and the WEA, as were many other members of the staff. I was isolated and as a newcomer had no influence and few friends.

The WEA was jubilant at what it considered to be its success in getting Gunn dismissed and some senior members of its Council thought and said that there would be little difficulty in getting rid of me if I attempted to implement policies in any way inimical to the interests of the WEA.

The nub of the University-WEA problem and the conflict between the Director of Extension and the Secretary of the WEA, endemic in Melbourne since 1924, was that for quite different reasons, under two Directors, Atkinson and Gunn, the Secretary of the WEA, Thompson, had been allowed to usurp all the powers and functions of the Director of Extension and to reduce that officer to a position of decorative unimportance. Thompson, until 1927, was Secretary to the Board and was therefore Secretary of the Tutorial Classes Committee. Although paid by funds provided by the University, he was the Secretary of an independent association, in no way under University control or direction. He took almost every important decision. He kept the selection of tutors and Extension lecturers virtually in his own hands and dispensed patronage thereby. Atkinson went along with this and gave Thompson a free hand. Gunn objected, but was outwitted by Thompson and his supporters: if he allowed matters to drift, he was censured for inactivity. The appalling situation which resulted is vividly described by F A Bland in a letter to G V Portus in 1927[1]. It was almost identical with that which I encountered in 1939. Almost, but not quite: there was a seemingly small difference and it gave me my chance.

For some years before 1937 a small group of dissatisfied members of the WEA had tried to reform it from within, but without success. As it happened, the Annual Meeting of March 1939 marked a turning point in their fortunes. The reformers then succeeded in dislodging the president and the treasurer, who had held office since 1930. At this meeting, S D Thompson, by now old and somewhat discouraged by his failure to get George Plant appointed as Director and by the success of the reforming group, announced that he intended to resign at the end of the financial year.

It was an opportunity I was unlikely to miss and I seized upon and exploited it for all it was worth. I made myself the leader of the reforming group, giving body and structure to their grievances and setting them on a course designed to reform the WEA from top to bottom by changing its oligarchical constitution. While not ostensibly breaking with the old guard I succeeded in splitting a hitherto united WEA and created such turmoil in it that I was able to get ahead with my own plans without much interference.

At the same time, I assiduously cultivated good relations in the University, and soon had the goodwill and support of most of the University members of the Board. The WEA members, once unanimous in their opposition to the Extension Director, now became uncertain and divided. Before long I was actively supported by some of them against their more conservative colleagues. I took an increasingly leading part in planning courses, appointing lecturers, devising publicity and making plans for expansion, at a pace which bewildered and dismayed my opponents.

Whereas Gunn never attended any WEA meetings or functions, I never missed an opportunity to show myself a leader in WEA circles. My strategy and tactics brought quick results but I was aware that the WEA could make one move which would face me with an intolerable situation.

The danger was that the WEA might determine the time of Thompson's departure and appoint G S Plant in his place without consultation or discussion with me or with the University. This would inevitably have meant a renewal of the Thompson–Gunn battle, with a young, vigorous and very popular WEA protagonist pitted against an Extension Director who had not yet had time to consolidate his position. It was precisely this that the Executive Committee of the WEA did propose to do, but since I was informed of the plot I was able to undo it. I insisted that since the WEA Secretary carried out important functions for the Board and since the WEA had had equal representation with the University in my appointment as Director, the appointment of a new Secretary must be made by a joint WEA–University committee and only after advertisement. I threatened that if these conditions were not accepted, the Board itself would appoint an Organising Secretary and withdraw financial support from the WEA. The WEA then dropped the proposal to appoint without consultation and agreed to the setting up of a joint committee.

While these discussions were going on I brought forward a series of proposals to change the character of the relationship between the two bodies. These were discussed by a joint committee of the WEA and the Board and accepted by both bodies. When the appointment of the new WEA Secretary was eventually made, therefore, it was the University which appointed an officer as Organising Secretary of the Extension Board who was then invited to act as Secretary of the WEA. The University was now clearly in control and all occasion for renewing the old quarrel had gone. I had triumphed all along the line and my efforts were rewarded. In one year I had remedied an intolerable situation and had cleared the way for a vigorous expansion of the work of the Extension Board. Still more remarkably, I had pushed through far reaching reforms in the face of strong opposition without losing the goodwill of my opponents. Indeed, I had gained the confidence and goodwill of the WEA to such an extent that thereafter the WEA became my most loyal and helpful base of support and I found friends and comrades there in difficult days to come.

Just then the Second World War broke out. I was now condemned to some years of dreary inactivity and speculation. For a brief time I served in the Short Wave Division of the Department of Information but soon returned to the University to try to keep some kind of adult education work going in the war years. I was a member of the Advisory Council on Services Education from its inception and until the end of the war lectured and wrote for the Army Education Service. War conditions precluded any substantial adult education advance, but there was a steady growth in the number of discussion groups, a form of adult education which I introduced in 1939. Towards the end of the war, some interesting Extension courses were begun for nurses, optometrists and youth leaders, which involved several University departments in teaching, while the diplomas were granted by extra-university authorities.

From 1944 onwards, my views about the future of adult education in Australia and about the administrative framework needed for it became clearer and were expressed in a pamphlet written for the Australian Council for Educational Research in 1944[2] and also in a report prepared for the Victorian Council of Public Education[3]. By the end of 1944 I had become fully convinced that if there was to be any significant expansion in funds and activities, this must result in vesting control in specially designed statutory authorities, to be set up by the State Governments with perhaps some kind of overall authority at the Commonwealth level and with Commonwealth funds. My ideas on these matters were discussed by the Extension Board and by the WEA and were accepted by both bodies, but there seemed to be little likelihood of any actual change. I became more and more depressed and despondent about the future of adult education within the University. I knew that there was little chance of obtaining funds for expansion in the post-war years and still less of convincing the authorities to take Extension seriously.

By early 1946 I could see no prospect for future growth. I thought it was all too likely that I would be condemned to spend the rest of my working life in a job which had by now become irksome because it rated so low on the scale of social and educational priorities. My relationship with University colleagues deteriorated: I had little hope of taking up an alternative academic career, since I had been a dabbler in many fields, without any acceptable speciality. Life in the University, which so clearly regarded Extension as a mere appendage and denied me any influence on policy or adequate resources for my work, became more and more intolerable.

In a mood induced by these tensions, I quarrelled with the Vice-Chancellor, J D G Medley, who had told me bluntly that his plans for post-war University growth did not envisage any expansion in Extension. I tendered my resignation to him to take effect from the 31 December 1946. [The resignation was not, in fact, accepted.] I now proposed to become a journalist, like Atkinson before me. Although I had some experience and aptitude, my lack of training and late start would almost certainly have precluded much success in this calling.

In the event, I did not become a journalist, though I did leave the University.

Early in 1946 I persuaded the Minister of Education, The Hon Francis Field, through the Director of Education, J A Seitz, to set up an Advisory Committee to draw up plans for post-war adult education in Victoria. This gave me the opportunity to put forward in detail suggestions I had already expounded in several pamphlets and in lectures and discussions with the Extension Board and the WEA. The report of the Advisory Committee was made in the form of a Draft Bill for an Act to establish a Council of Adult Education. With the help of the Secretary of the Advisory Committee, an officer of the Department of Education, I drew up the Bill, which was given a remarkably quick and favourable reception by the Government. It was adopted by Cabinet and after some desultory discussion in the Legislative Assembly passed all stages on 4 December 1946. Under this Act, the Director of Extension was given the responsibility of carrying out the duties of Director of Adult Education until the new Council could call for applications and appoint a Director. I was appointed as Director of Adult Education in June 1947. The WEA was dissolved by unanimous vote on 26 June 1950, but it ceased to function effectively in 1947. The line which began with Meredith Atkinson in 1918 ended abruptly with the cessation of the office of Director in 1947.

I found a solution for a difficult problem of institutional and personal relationships because I had a clear understanding of what I wanted to achieve. It was not by accident that I first brought about the downfall of the WEA and put the Extension Board in sole control and then in turn removed the Board itself. These were necessary tactical moves in an attempt to effect a major departure in both the conceptual and the institutional framework of adult education in Victoria.

When I entered the field, and for many years thereafter, thought about adult education was impeded, if not entirely blocked, by the institutional framework within which it was carried on. University Extension had little to do with adult education as we now understand and use that term. Its aim and purpose was to provide a kind of university education for those who were prepared to accept the conditions laid down by the university and who could afford the not inconsiderable cost. Workers' Education was intended primarily for an *élite* group of trade unionists: its aim was to give them a rigorous intellectual training through tutorial classes, which was intended to be the equivalent of a university course. Neither Extension nor the WEA were concerned with the needs of other than highly selected and restricted minorities—a tiny section of the upper middle class on the one hand and an even smaller band of trade unionists on the other.

In fact, neither Extension nor WEA did precisely what their professions proclaimed. They followed an uncertain and somewhat wavering course but it is clear from the practice of the time and from the character of the syllabus material that the inhibiting effect of concern for university standards and of what was thought to be in the interests of workers and likely to appeal to them still determined what was done.

I realised that the Extension and the WEA concepts were outmoded. I wanted a broadly based system, which would serve the actual needs of those who could be attracted, rather than a system which imposed predetermined limits on what was offered and fixed categories of those to whom it was offered. I was fully aware that the implementation of my plans could not be achieved within the existing structure and I set myself to change that structure by creating the Council of Adult Education, which had no obligations to either the University or the WEA.

My success in effecting this change—the most important single development in adult education in Australia, apart from the war-time Services Education scheme—was perhaps remarkable because I carried it through by personally persuading a State Government to pass an Act to set up a statutory authority. At the same time I induced the University to abolish the Extension Board which had had a continuous history since 1891 and I persuaded the WEA to dissolve.

In view of the relationship between Extension and the WEA when I came to Melbourne in 1939, such a change by 1946 seems almost miraculous but it came about because I had a clear head and a good deal of luck.

Postscript

There are two early indications that my ideas of both the concept and practice of adult education differed radically from those held by others engaged in the work at that time.

The first is my shaping of the Box Scheme, as it was then known, of adult education. This later became the Discussion Group Service in the CAE period. I first encountered the Box Scheme in the University of Western Australia in 1936. It had been introduced from New Zealand with support from the Carnegie Corporation, a little before my appointment there as Reader's Counsellor.

As conceived and developed in New Zealand, the Box Scheme was essentially a means to provide the equivalent of a tutorial class in country areas where it was impractical to provide tutors or to organise classes. The basis of the scheme was a course of lectures on a selected topic, written by an academic authority and sent in a package with a selection of books to illustrate or supplement the lectures. It was intended that the group, limited to ten or twelve members, would read and discuss the lecture and read at least some of the supplementary material and write an account of their discussion for critical comment by a tutor at the university.

I do not know how far the scheme was successful in New Zealand. It does not seem to have become a permanent picture of adult education there. In Western Australia, when I became responsible for its operation, some of its major problems were already apparent. The University failed to meet the obligation to keep in close touch with each group and payment of the tutors proved to be too great a burden. The logistic task of arranging to send the Boxes in sequences to a series of groups, which were required to complete work on Box I before tackling Box II, proved to be too difficult and the cost of providing the required duplicate sets was too great.

I liked some features of the scheme. I especially approved the idea of encouraging groups in country areas, where there were no libraries and little intellectual stimulus, to meet together to discuss books they had read. I promptly abandoned any suggestion that the scheme was in any way a substitute for a tutorial class. I jettisoned the central feature of the scheme as I first encountered it, the written lecture. My version provided instead a box which contained ten or twelve copies of the same book, together with a specially written introduction, suggesting how the book might be discussed, and some supplementary material. The groups were not asked to communicate their findings to the University, but correspondence about their progress was welcome.

At first I made some effort to group the books, so as to illustrate a theme—for example, Modern Thought, Philosophy or International Relations—but none to link them in a sequence. Soon the grouping became more tenuous: each box stood alone and groups selected those they wished to read from a catalogue. I made a special feature of a pamphlet advising groups about discussion methods, how to encourage the diffident and suppress the over talkative, and I now began to put a special emphasis on the value of reading and discussion groups as a means of sociable civilised communication. I spent a lot of my time in Western Australia visiting and observing discussion groups and became more and more convinced of their value, especially in the form in which I developed them after abandoning the concepts and the models on which they were initially begun.

The special virtue of discussion groups in my eyes was that they were a semi-permanent nucleus of adult education in each community. A tutorial class might meet for ten weeks or so—if it could be formed at all—and then it disbanded. A discussion group would normally meet for ten months and a group tended to continue for years and not to disband, although it brought in new members.

Moreover, while there might be one tutorial class in a provincial city or town, an even smaller community might have two or three or more discussion groups. They were potential centres of light and learning, involving contact with a wider world through books and through the discussion of the ideas contained in those books. They had social as well as educational value. I made serious mistakes in my early choice of books. I chose those I thought had serious content and high intellectual standards. It is a tribute to the groups in my charge in the West that they responded to the challenge and grappled steadily with the often hopelessly difficult books I chose. It was not until the Western Australian scheme was naturalised in Victoria and until capable women like Elizabeth Hamil, Nina Christesen and above all Gwennda Coalstad were appointed to direct the scheme that the choice of books became more sensible and the Group Service began to flourish. I had some useful qualities but at times lacked practical common sense!

I tried to introduce the Box Scheme as my first innovative venture in Victoria, after my appointment as Director of Extension in 1939. My proposal was rejected by the Board: the WEA members were totally opposed; the University members divided; and the proposal was decisively negated by the vote of the Director of Education, J A Seitz, one of the most influential members of the Board, who voted with the WEA.

It is significant that when I put forward the same proposal later in 1939 it was approved. By that time I had won the support of most of the WEA members of the Board as well as that of the University members. I lost no time in getting the Box Scheme launched and before World War Two broke out in September the first groups were enrolled and the organisation which enabled it to be carried on, however precariously through the war years, was in place. I never lost my conviction that the discussion groups were a most valuable contribution to adult education. I experimented briefly with groups organised by the ABC which were intended to discuss radio talks specially prepared by the Broadcasting Authority. It was soon found that such groups did not and could not succeed. The very considerable effort put into them by the ABC and the Extension Board was not rewarded and they soon faded out. By contrast, my groups continued to grow, without direct advertisement and in face of all the difficulties of procuring books during the war years. In later years, their value was demonstrated by research work at Bethel, Maine, into what came to be known as Groups Dynamics—an attempt to understand how groups operate and to estimate their value to the learning process. Many of the conclusions of the Bethel investigation had already been reached empirically by those who worked closely with discussion groups, but their findings had some value and much interest to those engaged in adult education.

The work of the discussion groups in later years was helped by convening schools which were essentially meetings of group members, brought together on a regional basis for conference and instruction. Such schools helped to create a sense of common interest of 'belonging' to groups otherwise isolated. The device of having one group engaged in a discussion, while another observed and reported its critical findings at the end of the session, proved to be a valuable aid. Requested visits to groups by experienced leaders also helped to stimulate and keep up interest. Another helpful innovation was the publication of 'Group Affairs' which reported on the group activities and carried news and information about what was happening at CAE headquarters.

The second indication that I was about to lead adult education into new ways was my move to establish *Meanjin Papers*, the Brisbane based literary periodical, in Melbourne under the auspices of the University[4]. This happened in 1943. It had become clear by then that the editor, Clem Christesen, could not carry on the journal, at that time virtually the only serious literary periodical in Australia, without substantial help. None seemed to be forthcoming in Brisbane or from elsewhere. I decided that an effort must be made to save *Meanjin* and I persuaded my Vice-Chancellor, John Medley, to consider a plan to bring the journal to Melbourne. It would be published by the University Press, the University would offer the editor an office, some clerical assistance and whatever financial support could be managed. The Extension Board took the first step and made a grant of £250 to bring Christesen to Melbourne to discuss the matter. He came and stayed with me while negotiations with the University were going on. The result was that *Meanjin* came to Melbourne: Christesen's wife, Nina, was appointed to the Extension Board's staff to direct Discussion Groups. She later founded the Russian Department of the University and Clem was able to give all his time to his editorial work. There were many financial problems, but the journal survived and flourished.

The reasons why I thought such a proposal and scheme was an appropriate one for a body like the Extension Board concerned with adult education were not clear to many people at the time or subsequently, but the Extension Board raised no difficulties. My primary aim in assisting *Meanjin* was not literary. I believed whole-heartedly in the importance of institutions—libraries and mechanics institutes, schools of arts, educational and cultural institutions of every kind—which promoted the discussion and examination of ideas and knowledge. To me, they were of primary importance to the health and well being of society. Australian literature, I thought, could not grow and flourish unless there were journals like *Meanjin* which enabled the exchange of ideas, the diffusion of knowledge and the critical examination of new and old writings. Writers in isolation were gravely handicapped and likely soon to fall silent. A critical journal served their purposes in innumerable ways and was vitally important. I made this point about literary periodicals in a pamphlet on Australian literature for the Army Education Service. My close association with the Adelaide based Jindyworrobak group and its principal architects, Ian Mudie and Rex Ingamells, reinforced this opinion. Literature in all its forms was a most important means of adult education, far more important than evening classes or lectures. It was a living, breathing diffusion of knowledge, affecting to some degree every literate member of the community. Why then should people concerned with adult education not take it very seriously indeed and why not look on a critical literary periodical as among the very first of the instruments for its advance?

Such reasoning seemed to me to be self evident. I was amazed that others could not see the force of my argument and tended to regard my concern with *Meanjin* as an aberration. Some years later, when I was deeply involved in supporting the case for libraries as central to the adult education cause, I was asked by a bewildered Dr Crowley, the Director of Adult Education in the University of Sydney, what libraries had to do with adult education. He thought only in terms of formal classes, lectures and discussion groups based on lectures, taught by qualified university teachers. I had a somewhat wider vision of my job and of its responsibilities. Although I was convinced of the value of *Meanjin* as a contributor to the broad spectrum of adult education, I made no attempt to control, influence or direct it. I was never a member of the editorial board, never a contributor to its pages and never attempted to use it to expound my ideas. Although Christesen and I were good friends, we saw little of each other and my move from the University to the CAE severed whatever link there was. I am proud, however, to have played a part in the rescue of such a valuable journal and still regard it as a significant contribution to adult education.

Underlying all my adult education practice and my thought about what to do and how to do it were my convictions about the nature of personal freedom in a modern society and the danger to liberty which I saw in advanced societies with highly organised and efficient means of manipulating opinion and moulding minds. I saw liberty as consisting in and being safeguarded by the number and variety of means to resist the exercise of authority or power. Liberty, I thought, existed in the interstices and not in the structure of modern society. No matter how well intentioned, how paternal, how genuinely concerned, how democratically elected, there was the ever present danger of erosion of freedom by Governments: the abdication of personal responsibility, the betrayal of the right of the individual to think and to choose for himself.

I thought the system of free, secular and compulsory education as it had developed in most advanced societies since the 1870s could easily become, and in many instances was already, a powerful instrument in the hands of popularly elected tyrannies to subvert and destroy individual liberty. My convictions of this score were deepened by the experience of living briefly under the Italian dictatorship of Mussolini and by my reading of what was happening in Germany and Russia. In these places education was highly valued, given huge resources, made seductive and attractive. I had never seen better elementary school text books than those produced in Italy under Mussolini, and what other country offered anything like 'Dopo Lavoro' as an adult education programme. But all this expenditure and effort had a clear and sinister purpose: it was designed to produce obedient, unquestioning and slavish minions of the State.

In the democracies, the aims were much less clearly expressed and not pursued with a like dedication and efficiency, but I doubted whether in the end the State systems of education were not designed to produce obedient workers for the State rather than free minded questioning citizens.

I thought that the main obstacle to the exercise of central power was the existence and functioning of institutions and agencies which did not derive their ideas or their power from the State, but which were independent and at times acted in a critical, opposing role. The churches, especially those large and well organised with a long history and tradition, the trade unions, the universities, were all important in this way. By their very existence they exercised a restraining force on the abuse of power—their significance was shown historically by the fact that when tyrannical governments emerged they made their first onslaughts on such agencies, to bring them under control.

Underpinning their efforts and essential to their successful operation, it was necessary to have an alert, educated constituency. It was a primary aim of adult education to try to form such groups of educated men and women, alert to the dangers of a loss of freedom and entering into the Kingdom of the mind and the enlargement of their individual talents and capacities.

My view was that adult education, while State supported, ought to be as free as possible from political direction or control. My further view was that a primary aim was to form locally based, independent centres for adult learning, giving them what help and encouragement they needed, but leaving them entirely free to grow and to experiment in their own way. I attached great importance to such centres and especially to those founded in my time as Director of Adult Education. I am glad to say that they have progressed splendidly under the guidance of my successors at the Council.

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1 Armand Bland to G V Portus and Herbert Heaton, letter headed 'Glenbrook, 28 May 1927', Tutorial Classes Department Records, University of Sydney. See extracts from this letter in the paper on J Alexander Gunn, pp. 15–16.

2 C R Badger, 'Adult education in post-war Australia', The Future of Education no. 8, Australian Council for Educational Research, 1944. Reprinted as Appendix 1, *Who Was Badger?*, Council of Adult Education, Melbourne, 1984, pp. 199–215.

[3] This (unpublished) report was submitted to the Council of Public Education which advised the Minister of Public Instruction in Victoria. See *Who Was Badger?*, p. 75: 'My suggestions were accepted by the Council and embodied in their report published in 1945.'

[4] See Badger's correspondence in the *Meanjin* archive, Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne.

G V PORTUS

Director of Tutorial Classes
University of Sydney, 1918–1934

Garnet Vere Portus was born at Morpeth, NSW on 7 June 1881, the youngest son of a large family. He was educated at State Schools, matriculating at East Maitland High School. He joined the Public Service of NSW as a junior clerk in the Department of Mines in 1900. In 1902 he decided to enter the ministry of the Church of England. He was accepted as a candidate for Holy Orders and enrolled at the University of Sydney in 1903. In 1907 he won a Rhodes Scholarship and entered New College, Oxford. He graduated BA (Oxon) in 1909. In 1910 he began theological studies at Hereford Theological College and was ordained deacon, the first step to the priesthood, in that year. He completed work for the degree of BLitt in 1911 and published his first book, *Caritas Anglicana*[1], his thesis for that degree. On his return to Australia in 1911, he was appointed curate in the parish of Merriwa, Diocese of Newcastle, and ordained priest in that year. He married in 1912 and was appointed to be rector of Cessnock. In 1913 he was appointed acting Professor of History in the University of Adelaide, an appointment for one year only while the Professor of History was on leave. After leaving Adelaide he did not return to parish work but in 1915 worked instead for Meredith Atkinson, the Director of Tutorial Classes at the University of Sydney, as a part-time organiser and tutor of evening classes in Sydney and Newcastle. In 1917 he was nominated as Assistant Director to Atkinson. Before he took up this position, Atkinson left Sydney for Melbourne and Portus was appointed as Director in 1918. He also lectured on Economic History in the University of Sydney. In 1934 he was invited to become Professor of History and Political Science in the University of Adelaide. He accepted and remained there until his death in 1954. Portus was always and affectionately called 'Jerry' by colleagues, students, friends and acquaintances. I never heard him called by any other name. It seems to have been conferred on him by work-mates during a spell of casual labour on the wharves at Morpeth. It suited him perfectly.

Although he was not pious nor strait-laced, he never lost the vaguely ecclesiastical *persona* he acquired in his days as a deacon and priest. He defined his role in adult education as a 'secular ministry', a phrase, a concept and a definition of status which I took from him and which coloured my thought and practice for some years. I found it difficult to escape from the phrase and from the implied concept.

At the time I knew him best, in Adelaide in 1935–6 when I was a junior member of his staff at the University, he was still much concerned about theological matters. He had very serious doubts about the Christian faith and especially about the historical evidences for Christianity—doubts which may in part have originated during his theological training under the distinguished theological historian and liberal, Hastings Rashdall. I remember especially his questioning of the Gospel Resurrection narratives and his analysis of St Paul's testimony to the Resurrection in 1 Cor 15 3:8. In the end, he rejected Christianity but retained nevertheless a nostalgic affection for the blissful certainties of his childhood and youth. He would sometimes chant the Psalms and some passages from the *Book of Common Prayer*. He seemed to long for a faith that was denied him. His sceptical intelligence and dislike of humbug prevented him from outward conformity. He was never anti-religious; he simply stopped believing. He indulged in no polemic, but gave up his long established habit of attending Matins, Evensong and Holy Communion. It must have been a severe deprivation.

It is typical of him that there was one occasion when, after many years of disuse, he donned cassock and surplice and acted as a priest. This was the funeral service for Edward Shann, Professor of Economics in the University of Adelaide. Shann died in 1935. As he was thought to have died by his own hand, he was denied burial by the rites of the Church of England[2]. Jerry knew how this would wound the Shann family. He defied the Bishop of Adelaide and bravely buried his friend and colleague. He never thereafter exercised any ecclesiastical powers.

I wish I could recall many of the stories he told of his youth and his ecclesiastical career. He told them with relish and with an histrionic flair all his own. I think he must have been a superb preacher. His sense of timing, his actor's ability in telling a tale and pointing a moral were remarkable. They made his lectures a delight, even when they were at times superficial. Two stories only of the many he told, I remember to this day. The first is best expressed in his own words. It concerns Bishop Stretch who as Portus points out was the first Australian born and bred to reach the Episcopal Bench. It is told in the autobiography he published in 1953:

> One day I attended him as chaplain at the consecration of a rectory. It was not the usual custom to consecrate rectories, but the local Rector was a very pious chap, much addicted to ritual. After a short service in the parish church we adjourned to the new rectory—a small four-roomed wooden cottage, for only the Rector lived there with an elderly housekeeper to look after him. On the lintels of the inside doors appropriate texts from the Psalms had been painted. We processed through the front door to the hall. At each of the inside doors I handed the Bishop his pastoral staff. He knocked with it and pronounced the text painted on the lintel. Then the door was opened from the inside by the Rector, and in we marched to say an appropriate prayer. The procedure was repeated at each door. The Rector always managed to be inside the door when the knock came. I began to wonder if he had climbed in through the window from outside each time. Over the dining-room door was painted, 'Thou givest them their meat in due season'; over the bedroom door, 'I laid me down and slept and rose up again: for the Lord sustained me'. The study lintel bore the words, 'Lord what love have I unto thy law: all the day long is my study in it'. This last, I thought, was probably a bit of an exaggeration. By this time the little three-foot-six hallway was packed tight. It could only accommodate about twelve of the parishioners beside the Bishop, the Rector, the pastoral staff and me. We turned from it into a still narrower hallway to the right. Wondering what else there was to do, I leaned back and said to the Bishop as he came round the corner, 'Are we going to bless the lavatory?'. Like a shot, he replied, 'There's no reason why we shouldn't. There's perfectly good text for it, "One deep calleth another, because of the noise of the water pipes"' I processed on down that narrow hall, bearing the pastoral staff, shaking with suppressed laughter, and wishing I had thought of that[3].

The other was about a slightly daft clergyman Jerry knew. He thought that the people of Israel had endured so long because they had written their history in very memorable form. This made remembrance easy. The antithetical strophes of the Psalms were the secret of national identity. He thought therefore that a history of the Church of England along the same lines should be written and set to the Anglican chant. Of this epic, Jerry recalled only a few lines. They were:

When Augustine and his monks came to England
Bringing with them their religion
Then comparatively pure...

He would intone these with the true Anglican emphasis. The result was devastatingly comic.

I now have no clear recollection of many of the things he told me about his work for adult education or of the advice he gave me. I do recall, however, his affectionate way of putting his arm around the shoulders of his young colleagues when he offered them sage counsel. He was at his best as a guide to the young. One night at a Political Science Conference held at Victor Harbour in 1936, there was a long story telling session at the bar with notable raconteurs like Norman Cowper and L F Giblin in top form and Jerry had held his own with the best of them. As I half carried him to his bed late that night, he cautioned me against the evils of strong drink. 'Badge' he called me then and I was always Badge to him.

He was a glorious man: idiosyncratic, full of whims and prejudices; no great scholar but knowledgeable and wise in his own way; a good teacher, a firm friend, a fine and loving man. Towards the end of his life increasing deafness cut him off from some of his fellows and made him seem at times querulous and even petulant. Yet he bore this affliction stoically for many years

I had no first hand knowledge of his work as Director of Tutorial Classes in Sydney. Two chapters of his autobiography[4] deal with this work and his reflections arising from it, but they are not detailed or critical enough to enable any fair estimate of him as an adult education practitioner to be made. He became Acting Director of Tutorial Classes for twelve months from 1 March 1918. His predecessor, Meredith Atkinson, told the Senate on 3 December 1917 that he had received an invitation to become Director in Melbourne, with the status and emoluments of a full professor of the University. The Senate resolved to raise no objections to his accepting the offer and on 9 February 1918 his resignation was accepted as from 28 February and

Portus was appointed to act in his stead.

He was placed in a very difficult position. He took over the work of the Department with no previous experience of its administration and with only a limited knowledge of adult education as then practised. Unlike Atkinson he had not sat at the feet of the great Mansbridge and had no first hand acquaintance with adult education as practised in England. He had, moreover, to defend the work of his new Department from a strongly mounted attack from senior members of the University, some of whom knew its work—and its failings—from close personal association, going back to its beginnings in 1913.

At the meeting of the Senate which resolved to allow Atkinson to go to Melbourne without protest, Mungo MacCallum, Professor of Modern Literature and a distinguished and influential member of the University, moved that a Committee of Enquiry be appointed to enquire into the Tutorial Classes Department. This Committee was duly appointed and its members were: the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor and Warden of Senate (*ex officio*); Judge Backhouse, Mr R Teece, Mr J Scrivener, Mr Peter Board, Mr Justice Ferguson and Mr A B Piddington. On 10 June 1918, H C L Anderson, Principal Librarian of the Public Library of NSW, was added to the Committee.

Its terms of reference, on the surface at least, were technical and did not imply a searching or hostile investigation. One concerned the relative rates of pay for junior staff of the University engaged in extra-mural work, and for extra-mural teachers appointed by the Joint Committee for Tutorial Classes. The other was to consider the proportionate Government assistance given to the general functions of the University and that allotted to the extra-mural work. On 10 June, the Committee presented an interim report to the Senate, stating that it had found evidence of bad administration and asking to be allowed to extend its enquiries to include investigation into the constitution of the Joint Committee and into the existing scheme for the conduct of Tutorial Classes—a notable widening of its scope. The request was granted.

The appointment of this Committee was the result of considerable uneasiness and disquiet within the University occasioned by Atkinson's somewhat flamboyant personality, his close identification with and proselytising zeal for the WEA and his none too scrupulous pursuit of his own advancement. It was in part occasioned by personal ill-feeling between MacCallum and Atkinson. The two men had been closely associated in the war years 1914–1918, as president and Secretary of the Universal Services League, which campaigned for conscription for military service. The campaign failed: Atkinson's part in it damaged the WEA, and perhaps the Tutorial Classes Department, severely and he fell out with MacCallum. Before this quarrel, however, and before Atkinson arrived in Sydney, MacCallum had expressed doubts about the wisdom of a close University and WEA association. He was not alone in thinking that the link with the WEA was not in the best interests of the University. Three well informed and initially well disposed academics made written submissions to the Committee of Enquiry and all these wished to limit the influence of the WEA. Professor W J Woodhouse (Greek) was at one time president of the WEA, Assistant Professor Todd (Latin), Secretary of the Extension Board from its inception and a member of the first Joint Committee, and Associate Professor Holme (English), also a member of the first Joint Committee and a foundation member of the WEA. Each made recommendations for changes in the conduct of the extra-mural work designed to restrict the influence of the WEA and to increase that of the University itself. All stressed the need to limit the status and power of the Director of Tutorial Classes and to reduce that officer to a much humbler position. Todd certainly disliked and distrusted Atkinson: the others seemed more concerned with principle than personal motives.

The Committee itself appears to have been reasonably unbiased. Portus says that 'few of [its members] knew or cared anything about extramural education'[5]. Two, A B Piddington and Peter Board, Director of Education, were well known and enthusiastic supporters of the WEA. It is not possible now to determine the attitude of other members or whether they were biased against the WEA or the Tutorial Classes Department or not. Professor Anderson, chairman of the Joint Committee, protested to the Senate on 18 August 1918 against what he called the *'ex parte'* findings of the Committee but his objections do not seem to have been taken very seriously.

Eight meetings in all were held and the final report came to the Senate on 19 August 1918. It made seven recommendations. In summary these were:

- That elementary and preparatory classes should not be undertaken by the University.
- That a board called the University Extension Board should be established to control and supervise all external University work.

- The members of the Board were to be the Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor, the Warden of Senate and four from the Senate and four from the University.
- That two standing committees of the new Board be established to assist it in organising classes and groups of students: the present Joint Committee with the WEA; and the existing Extension Board, henceforth to be called the Board for Extra-mural University Instruction.
- The Joint Committee to work on existing lines in organising tutorial classes for members of the WEA and similar associations—these classes to be as described on page 38 of Mansbridge's *University Tutorial Classes*.
- The Board for external University teaching to organise tutorial classes for 'non-WEA' members and also shorter extension courses at University standard, as well as public lectures and lecture courses by distinguished visitors.
- The new officer to replace the Director of Tutorial Classes to be called Organising Secretary and Chief Tutor.

The main thrust of the recommendations shows that the Committee wished the University to assert its primary responsibility for its extra-mural work and to regain control of the administration of its tutorial classes, which the Committee quite obviously thought had passed from the University to the voluntary association, the WEA. The point was made several times in the course of the enquiry that as matters stood the Joint Committee, which had an equal number of University and WEA members, was in fact dominated by the WEA, because the chairman, although appointed by the University, was in fact wholly committed to the WEA. Some members of the Committee also wanted to reduce the influence of the Director of Tutorial Classes, who had begun to assume an importance not originally contemplated. They wanted to give him a much less grandiose title and to reduce his salary.

In this context the recommendation that 'the Joint Committee should work on existing lines in organising tutorial classes for the WEA—these classes to be as described by Mansbridge *University Tutorial Classes* p38' is specially significant. Page 38 is the beginning of the fifth chapter of that book where Mansbridge gives a detailed description of what he calls 'A Complete Class'[6]. Students undertaking tutorial classes under the rules set out in that chapter were obliged to pledge themselves to attend the class of their choice for three years, to write twelve essays in each year of the course. Classes met for twenty four sessions of two hours each: they were small in number so as to enable individual attention to be given to each student by the tutor. Prescribed books must be read and students were expected to take part in many extra-course activities. If this recommendation had been accepted by the Senate and applied strictly, the WEA would soon have been driven from the field. Portus says:

> In the early years of the movement in Australia there were pockets of students—wage workers and others—who were genuinely anxious for education of this kind, and had awaited it for a long time. They joined the first classes, wrote the fortnightly essays required, and gave to the whole project that academic flavour beloved of dons. But presently we emptied these pockets, and came across those, in and out of the Labour movement, who were sufficiently interested to come to classes and discuss the lectures afterwards, but who would have been driven away by strict insistence on regular essay writing[7].

The tutorial classes organised by the WEA and provided by the University Department had by 1918 evolved in such a way that they bore little resemblance to the classes described by Mansbridge.

Some members of the University were well aware of this. They knew that the rules laid down for tutorial classes were not adhered to: they also knew that the claim of the WEA to have a significant contact with working men and women was not well founded. There was a large element of make believe in the whole movement. Its claims of high educational endeavour and strong working class support could not be sustained: and some of its critics were determined to expose it.

> MacCallum moved that the Senate adopt the recommendations of the Committee. In a surprise move, H C L Anderson proposed as an amendment: 'That a conjoint board be appointed by the Senate to replace the existing joint committee to undertake under the Senate organisation, supervision and control of tutorial classes and study circles: committee to be the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Warden, five University members from either the Senate or teaching staff: four from WEA together with Director Tutorial Classes'[8].

No decision on motion or amendment was taken on 19 August. Instead a special meeting was called to hear representatives of the Joint Committee. Those called were Professor Anderson (chairman), David Stewart, Secretary of the WEA, and G V Portus, Acting Director. When they had been heard, MacCallum's motion to adopt the Enquiry Committee report was put and lost and H C L Anderson's amendment adopted. On 4 November the Senate adopted amended by-laws for the conduct of Tutorial Classes and these embodied Anderson's proposals, though the term 'conjoint committee' was not included. At the same meeting a Senate Committee was set up to consider a report on the appointment of a Director of Tutorial Classes. It reported on 16 December 1918 and recommended that Portus be appointed at a salary of £600 a year. MacCallum, still unreconciled, moved that the post be advertised and the salary proposed be reconsidered. His motion was lost. In June 1919, F A Bland, the acting Assistant Director, was confirmed in his position and this critical testing time for the young Department of Tutorial Classes and its newly appointed Director appeared to have ended satisfactorily.

It was indeed a great victory for the Joint Committee. It thereafter reported directly to the Senate and was no longer subject to any kind of supervision by the Extension Board. The WEA maintained its position of privilege and influence: the Joint Committee became in fact the governing board of the Department of Tutorial Classes. Whether the victory contributed helpfully to the development of adult education in NSW is, to my mind, very doubtful. It could easily be argued that it placed the movement in a straight jacket from which it emerged only in 1982 with the departure of Dr Crowley and the breaking of the nexus which bound the University to the WEA.

Portus' account of this eventful history is curious and interesting. He wrote in old age, without reference to documents. He fails to give any satisfactory account of the reasons which led to the appointment of the Committee of Enquiry, says nothing at all about its members, tells some amusing stories of its proceedings, but does not reveal that among the reform proposals was one which would have drastically affected his own status and salary. Even though he says, 'I have given this story in some detail because, to my knowledge, it has never been set down and it may be useful for future historians of adult education in Australia to know what actually happened'[9], his account is vague and insubstantial. His most inexplicable omission is his failure to mention the critical importance of H C L Anderson. As he tells the story, the Department was saved by the efforts of Professor Anderson, Peter Board and to a lesser extent, those of A B Piddington and Mr Justice Street. The Senate minutes do not bear this out. Anderson may possibly have been added to the enquiry committee at the instigation of friends of the WEA on the Senate but he does not appear to have been partisan. His amendment to MacCallum's motion seems to have carried weight with the Senate because he was thought not to have any prior commitments. He does not appear to have been a member of the WEA and certainly had no connection with the Extension Board or the Tutorial Classes Department. His action, which undoubtedly saved the day for Portus, remains unexplained. Portus' failure to mention him at all is remarkable.

Portus does not claim that he was responsible for the Senate rejection of its Committee's recommendations but his narrative makes it clear that he worked hard and effectively behind the scenes to preserve the status quo. He wrote:

> In normal circumstances I could have supported such a solution [that is, the setting up of the Board of Extra-mural Education] provided the WEA had been given adequate representation on the controlling Board. But these were not normal times. All sorts of tensions had arisen between the members of the two bodies, not a few of them complicated by personal animosities. As it stood, the plan emasculated the responsibility of the WEA, and I felt sure it would perpetuate the existing distrust and suspicion of that body within the University[10].

It is very difficult to see how the Senate Committee's recommendations could fairly be said to have prejudiced the WEA position. They accorded the WEA a place of responsible privilege in the scheme for providing tutorial classes for WEA members. They provided that the University should be free to follow its own course for other tutorial classes and lectures. Nor is it easy to see how the 'existing distrust and suspicion' of the WEA within the University could have been perpetuated by the proposals: if that distrust and suspicion arose, as it seems to have arisen in the minds of many members of the University who were not merely hostile to Atkinson, it was due to the impression that the WEA had already secured too much influence and control over what was held to be a University function. These proposals were designed to allay, not to aggravate, that fear and suspicion by removing its cause.

It is impossible to say what the future of adult education in NSW might have been if the Senate had accepted and not rejected the recommendations of its Committee of Enquiry in 1918 and it is idle to speculate on the matter. What is true is that from that time onward until 1981, the WEA and not the University became the dominant partner. In my view this was not helpful. As a voluntary association, insecure and frightened of any change which might threaten its position, the WEA was essentially defensive and backward looking. It consistently opposed efforts by the University authorities to broaden the curriculum and the appeal of its adult education work. It embroiled the University in needless political arguments: it opposed the formation of new forms and institutions for adult education and at the same time manifestly failed to make any significant contribution and advanced only by a somewhat dubious appeal to sentiment and by skilful manipulation of opinion, manufactured or other, in its favour.

Portus failed to rise to the occasion at the moment when he might well have made his most original and his best contribution to the cause he served. There is little to say of his subsequent career in Sydney. He seems to have been an acceptable and well liked figure within the University and his status was enhanced because he had an intra-mural teaching post, as well as extra-mural responsibility. He did his work as Director conscientiously and well. There were no crises in his time but he left the Department much as he found it—a little worse off financially, though the reduction in the grant from £5,970 to £3,866 in 1930 was due to the Depression and does not reflect any lack of zeal or competence on Portus' part. His relationship with the WEA appears to have been uniformly cordial and he worked well with the WEA Secretary, David Stewart. There are no signs that he chafed under the limitations imposed by the WEA–University partnership: only at a later stage of his life did he raise the question as to 'whether the WEA…as a kind of general staff for adult educational campaigns, would not have been better called an Adult Educational Association'[11].

Perhaps his greatest contribution was made through his warm and engaging personality: people liked Portus. He talked readily and persuasively and a great deal of his persuasive talk was directed towards creating a favourable climate of opinion for adult education. He made no enemies, as Atkinson did; he was a good and efficient administrator; he did a worthwhile job and did it well; but he left no significant mark on Australian adult education—only a memory of a good and warm hearted man.

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1 G V Portus, *Caritas Anglicana*, Mowbrays, 1911.

2 John Portus, son of G V Portus told me that this story, widely believed, was not true. Portus officiated at the funeral at the special request of Shann's widow.

3 G V Portus, *Happy Highways*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1953, pp. 145–6.

4 *ibid.*, Chs XVI–XVII.

5 *ibid.*, p. 177.

6 A Mansbridge, *University Tutorial Classes, a Study in the Development of Higher Education among Working Men and Women*, Longmans, Green & Co.,New York, 1913.

7 Portus, *Happy Highways*, p. 194.

8 *Minutes* of the Senate, University of Sydney, 19 August 1918.

9 Portus, *Happy Highways*, p. 178.

10 *ibid.*, p. 177.

11 *ibid.*, p. 195.

WALTER GEORGE KEITH DUNCAN

Director of Tutorial Classes
University of Sydney, 1934–1951

Always known as 'Dunc', but sometimes as 'the good grey Doctor', W G K Duncan was born in Sydney in 1903. Educated at the Universities of Sydney (MA) and London (PhD) he majored in Political Science and Sociology. After taking his PhD he was awarded a Commonwealth Fellowship and spent two years in the USA mainly in the Universities of Chicago and California. His special field of interest at this time was in the study of population and immigration. He was appointed Assistant Director of Tutorial Classes, University of Sydney, in 1932 following the resignation of Armand Bland, who became Professor of Public Administration. He was Acting Director in 1934 after G V Portus moved to the Chair of History and Political Science at Adelaide, took over Portus' lectureship in Economic History and became Director of Tutorial Classes in 1935. He succeeded Portus as Professor of History and Political Science in the University of Adelaide in 1951. He retired in 1968.

I first met Duncan at a Summer School of the Australian Institute of Political Science held in Canberra—I think it must have been in 1935–1936 but I cannot now be sure. He was Director of Studies for the Institute and took a leading part in its work, editing a number of the reports issued following the Summer Schools and providing intellectual guidance for its programmes. I was at that time already engaged in adult education, but very much on the fringe, and in 1935 with no prospects of permanent employment in the field. There was no likelihood of very close association between us since he was already a leading figure in the work—Director in Sydney which was thought to be the most important adult education post in the country and an influential man in the Australian Institute of Political Science of which I was a very insignificant member, only noticed for my habit of making impassioned left wing comments on the sober contributions of my elders and betters. Two South Australians, Edgar Dawes, a Trade Union Secretary (later to be a vice-chairman of the ABC), and I were the radical wing of the AIPS at that time.

I applied for the position of Assistant Director to Duncan when there was a vacancy in 1936 but was unsuccessful. L J L Wilson from New Zealand was appointed. I, however, secured a foothold on the adult education ladder as Reader's Counsellor in the University of WA in 1936 and became Director of Adult Education there in 1937. A closer acquaintance with Duncan began in 1939 after I was appointed Director of University Extension in the University of Melbourne. We met at a Federal Conference of the WEA held in Melbourne just before the outbreak of war in November 1939. I told Duncan then of my plans for the future of adult education in Victoria, which involved a sharp break with a past in which the WEA had taken a leading role and the University Extension Board had been subordinated to it. I think he was not entirely happy about my plans or about the methods I proposed to implement them. At that time he accepted the traditional view that partnership between the University and the WEA meant that the WEA was to organise tutorial classes and was to be an equal partner with the University in planning them, and that it was for the University to attend to teaching only. I was determined to bring the WEA under control and to reduce its influence over policy and to free the Extension Board from any obligation to consult with it or to depend on it for the organisation of its adult education programme. He, I think, felt that this was detrimental to the best interests of both University and WEA.

I have perhaps somewhat misstated Duncan's view in what I have written above. I am sure that we did not agree but our disagreement might perhaps have been about tactics rather than principle. My doubt about my recollection arises because in 1937 the Tutorial Classes Department in Sydney began to set up discussion groups in country districts in NSW based upon a scheme borrowed from New

Zealand. This was a new initiative on the part of the University. Esmond Higgins comments:

> Dave [Stewart] did not like this...and he thought that all possible funds should be spent on classes, as nothing could be so rewarding educationally as direct tutor-student contact in classes; and he did not like the idea that the Department—whose proper task he considered was to teach, not to organise—should take the initiative in instituting a new service. It was only grudgingly and with the most serious misgivings that he gave way. He growled again in 1938 when the amount set aside for the Discussion Group Scheme was increased to £250 and the Joint Committee decided to advertise for a staff tutor to organise groups in the countryside.[1]

Duncan, it appears, was not averse to allowing his department to act independently of the WEA.

I was a frequent visitor to Sydney during the war years 1939–1945, attending meetings of the Services Education Council, the Talks Advisory Committee of the ABC and making occasional independent visits. Whenever I went to Sydney I called on Duncan at the University and also on Dave Stewart, the Secretary of the WEA. My visits were never, I think, wholly welcome. Stewart regarded me suspiciously from the beginning of my career in Melbourne and came eventually to look on me as the enemy. He was very much upset when I appointed a University officer to act as Secretary of the Victorian WEA and thereby effectively brought it under University control. Duncan and some members of his staff seemed to think that my close interest in their work implied critical appraisal and not a desire to learn. Duncan and I were never on really friendly terms. I thought him distant and cold, able but lacking in zeal for the cause. He no doubt thought me impulsive and perhaps machiavellian. What impressed me about Duncan and to a lesser extent about his successor, L J L Wilson, was that they accepted and loyally worked within the structure they inherited in spite of its obvious limitations and disadvantages. They had to rely on the WEA and most of all upon its Secretary, David Stewart, for all the organising on which their educational enterprises depended. The WEA prepared and published the syllabus of classes offered, it advertised the courses and enrolled students, it collected the fees and was responsible for finding accommodation, for arranging for books and other equipment needed for general administration. The Director had no power to control or direct the work of the Secretary on whom the success or failure of much of his work depended. The Secretary was the servant of an independent organisation and his cooperation could not be commanded or taken for granted. The Secretary on the other hand had a large say in the policy decisions of the Department of Tutorial Classes, because the WEA had an almost equal representation on the Joint Committee for Tutorial Classes. This Committee, appointed by the University Senate, was in fact the governing body of the Department. I could not and would not have worked under the limitations of this system of divided control. Personalities apart—and I did not share Duncan's apparent whole-hearted admiration of David Stewart—I would have insisted on asserting the authority of the University and on bringing the whole work under a single direction and control.

I thought Duncan foolish not to try to follow the example set by Melbourne and to reduce his dependence on the WEA. I admired, however, the doggedly patient way he stuck to the bargain he thought he was obliged to keep.

The disabilities, indeed the dangers, of relying upon the WEA for all organisational work for the Department of Tutorial Classes are well illustrated by the so called 'B40' dispute in 1942. 'B40' was the serial number of a discussion course planned and controlled by the Department. It was a course on Political Theories and Movements of Today written by P H Partridge, a lecturer in the University. Although the discussion courses were intended to be wholly directed and controlled by the University Department, by 1942 they were being actively promoted by the WEA, especially in suburban Sydney and in trade union circles. The course was attacked by left wing unions as being biased against the Soviet Union and demands were made that the WEA should withdraw it under threat of retaliatory action by the unions. The campaign against the WEA was skilfully directed and pressed hard. It was carried on vigorously in 1943 and 1944 and led to the disaffiliation from the WEA of many unions, the Labor Council and the Teachers' Federation, and it damaged the WEA severely. It is ironical that although the Tutorial Classes Department was wholly responsible for the course, it could only defend its work through the WEA. To what extent its own work was prejudiced by this unhappy affair it is impossible to say, but it was a clear illustration of potential dangers in the alliance with a partner inevitably involved in political affairs through its close contact with the trade union movement.

Duncan was a good and careful administrator. Under his guidance some expansion of the work took place: he also took a vigorous part in campaigns for adult education in the wider society. He was a forthright champion of liberty of speech, thought and writing: he gave energetic support to the campaign for a free library system in NSW and was a valued contributor to the work of the Services Education Council.

The most significant change in adult education in NSW in the time when Duncan was Director was the appointment by the State Government in 1941 of an Advisory Committee on Adult Education and the initiation of a fund to support current and future work. The Government placed a sum of £500 on the budget for 1941–1942 and the Advisory Committee recommended grants to the WEA, the Tutorial Classes Department and the Public Library of NSW. The latter grant was intended to institute a comprehensive scheme for training adult education tutors and librarians. Duncan played a leading part in the negotiations which secured the appointment of the Advisory Committee and he was the most important and influential member of the Committee itself.

Up to this point the Department had been wholly dependent on a grant from the University, which although it had reached £6,000 in 1941 seemed unlikely to be increased much beyond this point. The Advisory Committee, making its recommendations directly through the Minister of Education to the Government, opened up entirely new possibilities. Its initial allocation to the Department was a modest £161 in 1941. Ten years later it was £15,945. In 1961 it was £31,750. In 1941 the Department conducted 56 tutorial classes with a gross enrolment of 1,811; in 1951, 112 classes with 3,049 students enrolled; and in 1961 there were 170 classes with an enrolment of 4,293. The corresponding figures for the University appropriation to the Department are: 1941 – £6,000; 1951 – £13,250; and 1960 – £20,208. The extra funds provided by the Government permitted expansion in the tutorial class work and allowed expansion into other fields—discussion groups, the 'Kits' scheme and others, but the most notable growth was in the staff. In 1941 there were five academic members of the staff, including the tutor at Newcastle. In 1951 there were ten and there had been a large increase in the clerical staff. By 1961 the staff had grown to fourteen, almost all engaged in teaching evening classes, though some had other duties.

In 1944 the Advisory Committee recommended that an Advisory Board be set up, representative of all the main interests in adult education, with executive powers and, eventually, statutory authority. As a step in this direction it recommended the enlargement of the Advisory Committee into an Advisory Board, at first with no executive powers but with the function of advising the Minister in all matters relating to adult education. The recommendation was accepted: the Advisory Board was constituted and its initial meeting held in August 1945. It has continued in an enlarged and altered form almost to the present and has greatly expanded its range of influence over the pattern of the work in NSW. There can be no doubt that this move was inspired by Duncan and that the Minister acted on his prompting[2].

In 1944 Duncan was granted leave of absence by the University to conduct a survey of adult education in Australia for the Universities Commission, whose chairman, the economist, Professor R C Mills had long been interested in the matter and had given active support, especially to Services Education. The leave originally granted was from January to June, but was extended to cover the whole of 1944. Duncan made an extensive survey and gave the Commission a detailed report, accompanied by significant recommendations and proposals for development. The report was received but pigeonholed. Nothing whatever was done by the Commonwealth Government to implement it and the report itself never seems to have been circulated except among a limited circle of Duncan's friends and colleagues in Sydney. I never saw a copy at the time and whenever I mentioned it to Duncan, was told that it was a confidential document and could only be released by the Government which commissioned it. It was published in 1973 by the Department of Adult Education of the University of Adelaide, edited and introduced by Dr Derek Whitelock under the somewhat inappropriate title *The Vision Splendid*[3].

The report presents a well argued case for expanded adult education in post-war Australia. It marshals evidence from overseas and from expert authorities, surveying the then Australian scene with commendable candour and objectivity. It reflects the almost overwhelming effect of the war-time experience of popular adult education for the services upon an experienced civilian adult education administrator. It also shows the kind of hopes for a better and fuller life which were shared by the idealistic educators of that time. While the document is now hopelessly dated, it is still a valuable point of reference for the ideas and opinions of the 1940s, a time when there was great interest in education generally and a new awareness of the importance of adult education . The report is well presented and readable. Here and there it shows signs of some special pleading and a lack of rigour in the argument but Duncan was making a case and entering a plea.

The main theme is clear: Duncan recommended that the Commonwealth Government acknowledge the need for a developed adult education service and should itself accept responsibility for helping to provide such a service. Its help should be given through general grants to appropriate State adult education authorities and through special grants for limited periods. Duncan recognised that expanded adult education implied and required recruitment and training of teachers, leaders and organisers, as well as research into its special problems. He accordingly stressed the need for an Adult Education Department in one university for training of personnel for all states. He wanted a Federal Office of Education with an adult education division for general oversight of the work. He prescribed in detail the structure of the division and offered an estimate of its cost. In fact a Government Office of Education was established in 1945 but it had no division for adult education. The report envisaged that State adult education authorities would be set up after discussion and consultation between the Commonwealth and States. In its main recommendations the Duncan report did not go into detail about the constitution and functions of these authorities, but they are clearly set out in the body of the report. It was envisaged that the State Boards would be responsible to the Minister of Education and would have the Director of Education as chairman. The Boards would have representatives from many bodies and organisations concerned with adult education. The Boards would wherever possible work through voluntary bodies and local authorities. If necessary, however, they would establish an educational service of their own or set up subordinate bodies to take charge of particular fields of work. The universities were envisaged by Duncan as providing facilities for research and for the training of tutors, but not as providing bodies. Duncan had reached the conclusion which he laid down firmly, 'that neither voluntary bodies, nor Universities have the resources necessary for the development of an organised and comprehensive adult education service'[4]. Whether this implied that the universities and voluntary bodies should vacate the field after the State Boards had been established is not made clear but is, I think implied. An appendix (p) to the main report[5], not reproduced in Whitelock's version, set out a draft constitution for a State Board. This constitution closely resembles that embodied in the Victorian Adult Education Act of 1946.

The sweep and scope of Duncan's recommendations and the practical difficulties involved in implementing them made it unlikely that his report would be acted on by the Commonwealth Government. In the event, the report was submitted and nothing further was heard of it. Duncan had been asked to do a specific job for a Commonwealth agency: he did it, capably and energetically. That nothing came of his labours was not his fault. He was not in a position to influence Commonwealth policy and had no political influence or support.

What calls for explanation is not Duncan's failure to induce the Commonwealth Government to act, but his neglect, not to say deliberate refusal, to campaign for reform and expansion in NSW where he occupied a position of real importance and influence. The Advisory Committee appointed in 1941 opened up a distinct possibility for the creation of a State Board of Adult Education along the lines laid down in Duncan's report. There is some evidence that the Government of NSW would have favoured and indeed seemed eager to provide an expanded and organised adult education service. In late 1946 the Minister of Education asked the Advisory Board for a 'comprehensive minute' for a plan for development. It is inexplicable in view of these possibilities and in view of Duncan's theoretical position that he should have made no attempt at all to set up a State Adult Education Board but continued to work within the limits of the existing University–WEA set up. A later report by him to the Tasmanian Government advocated the establishment of a statutory authority and as a result an Adult Education Board was set up there. I do not know if his reports to the Government of NSW envisaged a similar Board there: if they did it is inexplicable that with a favourable Government and a suitable climate of opinion he should have failed to effect a change.

In the *Australian Journal of Adult Education*[6], I offered some speculative, and perhaps offensive, reasons for Duncan's lack of action at this time. I wrote then, as I write now, without access to the full evidence and from a very superficial acquaintance with the NSW situation as it was in those crucial years. But the question I then posed had, and I still think has, some historical significance. Neither Duncan nor any member of the NSW Department has ever commented on my article, disputed its assertions or offered any explanation of the events or non-events of 1944–1946.

Duncan by 1944 had moved conceptually far beyond any view of adult education which could comfortably enable it to be accommodated within a university. He recognised quite plainly that the WEA was an unsuitable voluntary body for expansion and growth. It was inappropriate to describe the extra-mural work of the university, whether conducted by the university itself or in association with a voluntary body, as 'adult education' as defined by Duncan himself. It meant a blurring of perceptions to confuse the special and specialised work of the university or of the WEA with 'adult education' in general and the confusion led to many practical difficulties and to much pointless argument. Yet Duncan, who was so admirably clear headed and incisive on paper, continued to work with institutions and ideas which he had intellectually discarded as inappropriate. I find it difficult to explain this contradiction and difficult to avoid the conclusion that in tolerating it, Duncan served adult education much less well and effectively than he could and perhaps should have done.

In 1944 he brought about an important change in the staffing arrangements of his Department. He persuaded the Vice-Chancellor to agree that academic members of the Department should be graded and paid in the same way as members of the teaching staff of the University. Before this the staff of the Department had been paid according to scales determined by the Joint Committee and these scales were not specifically related to those of the teaching staff. Appointees were normally deemed to have tenure and were eligible for most of the privileges and entitlements of other staff members, but their special status and the nature of their work was recognised by differential salary scales. Duncan's change blurred this important distinction. It created an 'illusion' that the work of a staff tutor of the Department was in some way comparable or identical with that of a member of the teaching staff. This was clearly not true and was known not to be true by both the staff and by the members of the Department. They were to this extent placed in a false position and compelled to assert more and more vigorously the academic quality and significance of their work. At the time when Duncan was stressing the need for broad, non-specialised and culturally oriented programmes for adult education, he moved to encourage his staff to identify themselves more and more closely with the 'academic' as opposed to the 'popular' aspect of adult education. The results were unfortunate in other ways, for they meant that the Department was compelled to pay strict attention to high academic attainment in making appointments, while the work actually carried out was not academic in any strict sense. The limitations imposed by the WEA link also made for difficulties. The academic staff of the Department were appointed to teach and not to organise. Organisation was the function and privilege of the WEA. The teachers therefore were in theory obliged to teach evening classes, year in, year out, to a steadily diminishing band of students who had heard most of what they had to give after a few years. They could not do much in the way of research; their time was hardly fully occupied by their teaching duties; they were forbidden to organise either for themselves or others. This system was bound to impose serious strains. Most members of the staff in fact engaged one way or another in educational organisation and avoided the intolerable burden of teaching five evening classes each year and doing nothing else.

Some strange consequences of academic methods of appointment can be seen in the career of L C Masterman, who was appointed to organise discussion groups in country areas, following the institution of the groups by Wilson in 1937. Masterman began his work in 1939. He had soon organised so many groups that the Department could not cope and he had to be withdrawn from the field. While this result could perhaps not have been foreseen, it was evident from the beginning that the appointment should have been regarded as temporary and *ad hoc*, but there was no provision for this. As a result, the unfortunate Masterman was compelled to become Departmental Librarian, to undergo a special course of training to fit him for a job he had not sought and for which he was not appointed. He remained for many years a not wholly contented nor effective contributor to a Department which was abnormally given to staff troubles of one kind or another.

Duncan was never as happy as his predecessors, Atkinson and Portus, in his relations with the WEA. Although he and Stewart appear to have liked and respected each other, it is evident that Duncan chafed under the necessity to consult with the WEA and was not willing to have his Department limited to the work approved of by his partner. Duncan insisted that new departures, like the discussion group and 'Kit' schemes, were wholly his responsibility and had nothing to do with the WEA. In 1949 Wilson, Duncan's Assistant Director, made a suggestion that the University should institute and direct a comprehensive and diversified adult education programme and as a beginning should enlarge the Joint Committee by bringing in representatives of other interests than those of the University and the WEA. How far Duncan supported these suggestions, I do not know. They were, however, generally consonant with his ideas, but came to nothing in the face of WEA opposition.

There was much acrimonious discussion and a near permanent breach of relations over the appointment of a resident adult education officer at the New England University College. The appointed officer began to work ostensibly under the *aegis* of the Joint Committee but he was in fact immediately responsible to the Warden of the College. Clearly with Duncan's approval, he took no steps at all to set up a branch of the WEA and resisted the WEA claims to a share of the class fees collected. The arguments over the New England appointment dragged on until 1950 when Stewart grudgingly admitted that the Advisory Committee of the New England University College and not the Joint Committee should appoint tutors and arrange classes in the region. Had Duncan remained in office it is not inconceivable that the Sydney University might likewise have declared its independence. It must always remain an intriguing question why he did not assert his independence of the WEA and the autonomy of his own Department from the outset of his career in the University.

He left Sydney in 1951, having succeeded his predecessor, G V Portus, in the Chair of History and Political Science in Adelaide. No advertisement was called for his Sydney post, but his Assistant Director, L J L Wilson, was immediately appointed as Acting Director, and then as Director. In Adelaide he continued to support the cause of adult education, serving as a member of the Adult Education Board and for a year as president of the Australian Association for Adult Education. He made no further contribution to the literature of the subject.

Postscript

Years after my paper on W G K Duncan was written, Dr Desmond Crowley of the University of Sydney sent me some papers that set me thinking again about Duncan and his place in Australian adult education. Documents from the archives of the Tutorial Classes Department of the University of Sydney throw a good deal of light on the situation in the early years of 1941 onwards until Duncan's departure for Adelaide in 1951.

In 1942 F A Bland, chairman of the Joint Committee for Tutorial Classes, submitted a memorandum to the Professorial Board recommending that the status of the Director of Tutorial Classes be raised to professorial rank and that the occupant of that office should be known as Professor in Charge of the Department of Adult Education. The motion was moved at the instance of the Joint Committee, with the approval of the Vice-Chancellor and the chairman of the Board. On 23 November 1942 Bland moved at the Professorial Board 'that in the opinion of the Board, the status of the office of Director of Tutorial Classes...should be raised to that of professorial rank'[7]. His motion was lost. Instead a proposal by Professor R C Mills that a Committee be appointed to look into the question of extra-mural studies was accepted and the Committee was duly appointed on 15 February 1943. Its members were: Professor Eric Ashly, Professor F A Bland, Messrs Earl, McCrae, Mills, Roberts and Stout—most were favourable to the Bland proposal.

This Committee reported to the Board on 22 November 1943. Its major recommendation was that 'the role of the University in adult education is the provision of facilities for post-graduate research and professional training in the theory and technique of adult education. To provide for this the Board should ask the Senate to establish a Department of Adult Education, under a Professor of Adult Education'[8]. At this meeting Professor F A Bland moved that the report be adopted. Professor John Anderson (Professor of Philosophy) moved an amendment that the report be rejected as a whole and that the matter be referred to a Committee of the Professorial Board. He later moved that the report should not be received. It was agreed after considerable discussion that the report should be considered at a special meeting to be called early in 1944.

On 26 June 1944 Anderson made a statement to the Board. He reviewed the work of the Committee of Enquiry and pointed out that the question raised by Professor Mills was the coordination of different types of extra-mural teaching undertaken by the University. Yet what the Committee proposed was 'not any "extra-mural" activity but the setting up of *internal* courses, to train teachers for, and otherwise assist, the work of non-university bodies'[9]. This attack was well timed and devastating. Some confused discussion followed but the proposal of a Chair for Duncan was buried once and for all. The matter was dropped and finally allowed to lapse by resolution of the Board in February 1949[10].

The evidence suggests that by 1942 Duncan recognised the need for a radical departure from the University-WEA pattern for providing adult education and that is confirmed by his 1944 report. Instead, however, of attempting to change the system he sought to have himself appointed as a Professor of Adult Education and seemed to make this a condition of bringing about the radical changes he knew to be desirable. It seems that he felt himself unable to face the challenge of directing a system of adult education outside the university and preferred to remain within a system he knew to be outmoded. Had he been appointed as Professor of Adult Education in 1942, I have no doubt that there would have been a very different story to tell.

The story can be read in various ways. It may be read as a somewhat inept and ill-thought out attempt by Duncan and his friends to get him a prestigious post and to give him a chance to rid himself of work, such as the conduct of evening classes, which he found distasteful, and to devote himself to university teaching and research. In this version a rather shabby plot was foiled by the intervention of one man, who recognised it as a ploy for personal advantage and determined to stop it.

Another way of reading it, however, is to see it as the story of a carefully thought out plan for a radical reconstruction of the Department of Tutorial Classes, of its relationship to the WEA and of the involvement of the University in adult education. On this reading Anderson's intervention becomes a personally motivated and possibly malicious attack on a group of well intentioned reformers, as well as on Duncan.

Several observations need to be made. Anderson, in his statement of 20 June, stated that the Committee had not dealt with the questions it was appointed to consider: that is, the coordination of different types of extra-mural teaching undertaken by the University. But the Committee had concerned itself with a quite different question, the part to be played by the University in a State scheme of adult education. This was so evidently true that the Committee did not attempt to refute the charge. Also, in his statement Anderson at no point displays any hostility to Duncan and says further that the adoption of his motion—that is, to reject the report *in toto*—would not prevent the Board from opening the whole question of the University position in adult education to a Committee which would not prejudge the main issues.

He also noted that the Committee, by its own confession, 'had naturally taken into consultation only persons concerned with furthering adult education'[11]—thus implying that a certain type of conclusion was favoured from the outset. What I find surprising is that although I was in fairly close touch with Duncan in 1941, 1942 and 1943, because we were members of the Services Education Council and because on one or two occasions at least I stayed at his home in Sydney, I knew nothing whatever about his plans for the future of adult education and nothing about the plan to elevate him to a Chair in the University of Sydney. Yet it seems clear from the Professorial Board documents that plans for setting up a State Board were well advanced and that had Duncan been given his Chair, the plans would have been speedily implemented.

I am even more surprised that L J L Wilson, Duncan's Assistant Director, was equally in the dark. Yet Wilson assured me that he knew nothing about the plans, as later he knew nothing about what Duncan had written in his 1944 Report.

There was, of course, no reason why Duncan should tell me of his plans. There was every reason why Wilson and other members of Duncan's staff should have been informed. After all, if Duncan's plan succeeded they were likely to find themselves outside the University and employed by a State Board—a prospect I doubt if they would greatly have relished—while their chief remained securely within the University and in a commanding position.

The other matter which surprises me is that David Stewart, the formidable Secretary of the WEA, who must have recognised the consequences of a break with the University and the setting up of a State Board, does not appear to have voiced any opposition. There is no record of his involvement, except in presenting evidence to the Committee. Whether he ever saw the report which went to the Professorial Board is uncertain—I think it most unlikely or more would have been heard from him. It was Anderson, no friend of the WEA, who saved it by forcing the rejection of the Committee's report to the Professorial Board.

Duncan died in Adelaide on 18 December 1987. He left a large legacy—almost $500,000—to support and encourage needy students.

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[1] E M Higgins, ***David Stewart and the WEA***, Workers' Educational Association of NSW, Sydney, p. 70.

2 At the end of 1990, the further step, the creation of a statutory authority to be called the Board of Adult and Community Education, was taken by the NSW Government, thus completing the work begun in 1944.

3 Derek Whitelock (ed.), *The Vision Splendid. Adult Education in Australia*, W G K Duncan's 1944 report with commentaries and an introduction by Whitelock. Publication no. 35, Department of Adult Education, University of Adelaide, 1973.

4 *ibid.*

5 A copy of the original report is held in the National Library, Canberra.

6 C R Badger, 'The Duncan Report: a Comment', *Australian Journal of Adult Education*, vol. 13, no. 3, November 1973, pp. 153–7.

7 *Minutes* of the Professorial Board, University of Sydney, 23 November 1942, p. 344.

8 *ibid.*, 22 November 1943.

9 *ibid.*, 26 June 1944, 'Statement by Professor Anderson', (dated 20 June 1944).

10 *ibid.*, 28 February 1949.

11 *ibid.*, 26 June 1944, 'Statement by Professor Anderson'.

DESMOND CROWLEY

The Fifth and Last Director of Tutorial Classes
University of Sydney, 1965–1982

On 12 August 1982 I attended a dinner at the University of Sydney in honour of Dr Desmond Crowley, Director of Adult Education in that university, who was about to retire at the end of that month. It was not an altogether agreeable function, for apart from some natural sadness in farewelling Crowley, who had been Director since 1965, all who attended knew that this was also a kind of farewell to the Department Crowley had led and served. It had already been announced that the University would reorganise the Department after Crowley retired, that no successor would be appointed, that the historic connection between the University and the WEA would be broken and that the University would no longer play a leading role in adult education in NSW. Nothing was said about this at the dinner but all present knew that this was a dual leavetaking: we were saying goodbye to a man and to an institution.

I also knew that Crowley was very near the point of a complete breakdown in his health. The strain of directing a most difficult staff, the worry of the enquiry into his Department that the University made, and the sense that all the effort he had put into his work over the years had been wasted, made life for him at this time a heavy burden.

We had held a seminar on Dr W G K Duncan's 1944 report on adult education in the Department at 2.30 p.m. on the day of the dinner. It was not attended by the staff of the Department who were invited—the staff had for some time before this conspicuously avoided attending any function arranged by the Director. I noticed that Crowley had great difficulty in concentrating on the topic under discussion and he told me that he knew he was in a very bad way and needed rest and refreshment.

This apart, I felt the atmosphere at the dinner to be a little strained, a little melancholy. A number of people whom I expected to see were not there and the reason for their absence was disturbing. In Crowley's last years as Director there was considerable dissension and conflict within the Department brought about, at least in part, because the work was carried on under the strain of uncertainty and anxiety about the future. In 1978 the University appointed a Committee to enquire into the work of the Department and to make recommendations about the future. While the Committee deliberated, work was almost at a standstill. After its report was completed in 1980 important decisions had to be taken but they were still delayed. Some of the staff lost confidence in Crowley's leadership and he found himself at odds with his critics. In the event, only three members of his staff attended the farewell dinner. The pointed absence of the majority could not but be taken as a sign that the departing Director had not wholly kept the affection and confidence of his colleagues.

I was in a strange mood at this dinner. I was merely an invited guest but was very inclined to find fault, though it was none of my business. I felt it unfortunate that the Vice-Chancellor could not attend and that the Chancellor, Sir Herman Black, farewelled Dr Crowley by means of a recorded message. I regretted that the Professorial Board was not represented, nor the Staff Association. There was no official representative of the WEA of NSW. I still find this difficult to believe in view of the long and close relationship between the two organisations. I made a speech. I tried to be light hearted, even amusing, and no doubt failed dismally. I certainly felt far from light-hearted and found nothing amusing in the circumstances of the dinner.

I slept fitfully that night. Recollections of incidents in my long association with organised adult education in the University of Sydney crowded in on me. I remembered, too, many of those who had been involved in the work of the Sydney Department, as staff members, as close associates and friends. I recalled their names and personalities, their successes and failures, their friendship and their hostility towards some of my actions and ideas which from time to time had been strongly felt and vigorously expressed.

Being present at the funeral rites of adult education in the University of Sydney was a disturbing experience. I felt that in a strange way I had been almost as much a part of that history as I had been of the history of adult education in Victoria. It was not only that I had always felt interested in a sympathetic way towards all adult education work, wherever carried on and by whatever agency; it was that Sydney made a special claim and appeal. I was never as much involved with any of my interstate colleagues as I was with Duncan, Wilson and Crowley, the three Directors in my time. I regarded them as colleagues and co-workers in the common task. They were the guardians of an important tradition which I rejected but whose influence over my thought and action was nevertheless profound. Brooding over these things in the disturbed night, I wondered at my emotional reactions to the occasion. I had predicted years before 1982 that all the Australian Universities would eventually stop being providing bodies for general adult education. I had gone beyond prediction and actively campaigned that they should stop. I foresaw that sooner or later the Commonwealth Government would no longer provide funds for extramural work and would force the universities either to abandon it or provide for it out of their own increasingly restricted budgets. I had been sharply critical of what the Universities and especially the University of Sydney actually did in the name of adult education and had publicly and repeatedly drawn attention to what I thought were its misconceptions and shortcomings. Yet now, when what I had foreseen and favoured had come to pass and I should perhaps have rejoiced, I felt dejected and dismayed. I had not expected my prophecies to be fulfilled quite so soon and not at all in the way it had happened. I had thought of a gradual winding down or a planned and ordered transfer of functions and resources, of new institutions shaped under university guidance, of new ideas, programmes and structures emerging gradually. Yet here and now before my eyes there was a sudden sharp break. One day, the Department of Adult Education, foster child of the Department of Tutorial Classes, in place and vigorous since 1914 in the University: the next, the Department dissolved and a faintly adumbrated Centre for Continuing Education as a possible legatee of some minute part of its work and traditions. Why had this come about? How to account for this turn of events?

I decided that I should try to explain what had happened, and why, by looking carefully at the Sydney University Department of Adult Education and especially at the work of Desmond Crowley, its Director from 1965 until he retired in 1982. I have not been able to do this as thoroughly as it should be done for I have not had access to the records of the Department or to the University archives.

I have, however, had the advantage of close and long contact with Crowley himself. Though we differed in almost every possible way and held diametrically opposite views about adult education, we remained friends and Crowley told me on the occasion of his farewell dinner that he felt he had far more in common with me than with anyone else concerned with Australian adult education. For my part, I always liked and respected him, even when I thought him misguided and on a road to ruin.

Desmond Crowley was born in Invercargill, in the South Island of New Zealand. He was educated at the University of Otago, graduating as BA in 1940 and MA and Diploma of Education in 1946. After war service he held a short term lectureship in History at Otago and thereafter went to the London School of Economics and completed his PhD. His thesis was on 'The Origins of the Revolt of the British Labour Movement from Liberalism'. He was appointed as Assistant Director of Adult Education at the University of Adelaide in 1959. The Director was a fellow New Zealander—Arnold Hely—and Crowley remained there until appointed as Director of Adult Education at the University of Sydney.

The Department Crowley came to direct in 1965 was by no means a happy one and it would have taken a man of great wisdom, strength and tact to make it function effectively. One of its major difficulties was that Crowley's predecessor, L J L Wilson, had remained in office for well over a year after his due time of retirement. The stated reason for this unusual extension of time was that Wilson, under direction from the University, was to bring about changes in the structure and administration of the Department—in his time known as the Department of Tutorial Classes—which were felt to be necessary before a new Director was appointed. One result was that the staff, who had largely lost faith in Wilson's direction well before he retired, were extremely hostile and distrustful. Some members thought that one of their number should be appointed and were bitterly opposed to the appointment of an outsider.

The changes that Wilson made to the Department were not universally approved and indeed were soon found by Crowley himself to be unworkable. They involved the setting up of a Department of Adult Education under a Director who was to have a place on the Professorial Board. The new Department brought together the functions of the old Department and those of the Extension Board—which had hitherto been a completely separate and independent body. It also changed the relationship between the Tutorial Classes Department and the WEA. Until 1964 the Joint Committee—that is, a Committee whose members were drawn from the University and the WEA—was in effect the governing body of the Department. Its functions were executive as well as advisory, subject to the overriding authority of the University Senate and the Vice-Chancellor. Wilson's reforms abolished the Joint Committee and set up instead three Committees, one for Extension, one for the Tutorial Classes and adult education functions and another to act as a go between. All were now subject to the Professorial Board and the direct line to the Senate was broken.

A memorandum by Wilson to the WEA in May 1963 reveals that Wilson expected the WEA to react unfavourably to his proposal for a Department of Adult Education. If, however, the memorandum can be trusted it does seem to show that Wilson was acting on the prompting of the University authorities, who he says 'have been for a long time of the view that the amalgamation proposed [that is, of the Extension Board and the Department of Tutorial Classes] is necessary and very desirable'[1]. In a letter to me on 10 August 1983, Wilson said the Vice-Chancellor in 1950 had told him to marry the Extension Board to the Department, but for various reasons Wilson delayed acting on this demand until 1964, when he proposed to abolish the two main Committees of the Department of Adult Education and to create a new Board of Adult Education. This Board is defined under Resolutions of the Senate[2]. Its members included nominees of the WEA and of the academic staff of the Department. Crowley found it difficult to work with the Board also, although it was created largely for his benefit.

At the centre of Crowley's problems on taking over from Wilson in 1965 was that of his relationship to the staff of the Department. Their position—there were not many permanent, full-time members of the staff of the Department, possibly ten—was, as the report of the Working Party on Continuing Education reported to the University in 1980, disquieting and anomalous. W G K Duncan, when Director, had arranged that members of the staff of the Department of Tutorial Classes were to be appointed on the same terms and remuneration as others permanent members of the University staff, instead of, as before, being appointed by the Joint Committee on terms determined by that Committee. Although this seemed to be an advantage at the time, it was soon seen to be an uneasy progress. As the Working Party of 1980 reported, it '...is aware that there is considerable disquiet among some of the staff of the Department...regarding their status in the University *vis-à-vis* other academic staff. They seem to feel that they may be perceived by other members of the University as "second class" academics, not participating in research because of their administrative responsibilities for courses and not being eligible for promotion within the Department beyond the grade of Senior Lecturer'[3]. The report continues:

> ...it does seem that members of the Department are almost over sensitive to the charge that somehow they are of low academic esteem. In regard to promotion, it must be conceded that the penalty for having University salary scales and titles is that similar qualifications for appointment and promotion have to be met. Many University staff believe that members of the Department are appointed and promoted on lower achievement than that of other University staff...Perhaps the mistake lies in linking the academic members of the Department and the University as being generally equivalent, and perhaps consideration should be given to establishing separate grades (and salaries?) for the Department, so that the expectations of the staff members can reasonably be met[4].

It is not my view only, but that of most people who have studied the history of the Sydney experience, that the root of most of the troubles was that the staff were in a thoroughly anomalous and false position. From the Director down to the latest recruited lecturer they had the status of university lecturers—but their work and their contribution, valuable as it often was, lay quite outside anything that even remotely concerned the university. Men and women put in a situation of that kind generally react by becoming paranoid—defensive, quarrelsome, uncooperative, unbalanced in judgement and temper.

The symptoms are clear enough in two of my case studies, Atkinson and Gunn (and perhaps Crowley makes a third). That others escaped is because they ceased to be teachers and administrators in University Adult Education. Crowley wrote to me in June 1983 telling me about :

> ...what I went through in my 19 years. Constant bitter fighting and intrigue the whole time and after Eddy's death Carmichael, supported by half the

> Dep[artmen]t with most of the other half keeping out of the argument, demanding that we operate on democratic lines. And of course, this being a university, I could do nothing to silence opposition'[5].

Poor Crowley. Having experienced at first hand something of the malevolence and the intransigent brutality of the tactics used by some members of his Department in their opposition to the formation of the Australian Association of Adult Education in 1960 and their subsequent determination to render it powerless, I feel for him and for his troubles. He was born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. May he rest in peace. He died in Sydney on Saturday 4 January 1984.

In my opinion there were three occasions at least in the history of the Department of Tutorial Classes in Sydney when clear alternative courses of action were open to the presiding Directors. The first of these was in 1918 at the beginning of the directorship of G V Portus. A second was in 1944, when Duncan was Director and when there was a genuine possibility to set up a statutory body for adult education in NSW. The third was when Wilson was given an opportunity in 1964 to restructure extramural work within the University; an opportunity, which, unfortunately, he failed to use effectively.

None of these opportunities was seized. Instead there was much unsatisfactory tinkering with defective machinery. The end result was that the Department, begun with such high hopes in 1914, and with real achievements to its credit, faded away into oblivion and left scarcely a trace.[6]

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1 J L J Wilson, 'Notes on questions arising from proposals for a new Department of Adult Education', 31 May 1963, p. 4.

2 University of Sydney, *Calendar 1980*, pp. 320–1.

3 'Report of the working party on continuing education', University of Sydney, 22 May 1980, p. 7.

4 *ibid.* pp. 7–8.

5 Dr D Crowley to C R Badger, letter headed 'Willoughby, NSW, 3 June 1983'.

6 I understand that, more recently, there have been positive changes in this situation.

PART II

WHO KILLED THE WEA?

WHO KILLED THE WEA IN VICTORIA?

A FOOTNOTE TO HISTORY

The only accurate answer to the above question is that the WEA was not killed. As recorded in the *Minutes* of the WEA, the organisation was wound up by an Extraordinary General Meeting of members, called for this purpose, on 26 July 1950. The assets of the Association were passed to a new organisation, formed by the WEA and known as the Adult Education Association (AEA) of Victoria. The decision was unanimous, as was the decision of the WEA Council to call the meeting when, after hearing the report of a Special Committee of the WEA Council on 19 March 1947, the Council resolved on its future actions[1].

Certainly the background of this remarkable decision, by which a voluntary association with a history going back over the previous 34 years decided upon its own extinction, and without a single dissentient voice or protest being registered by the members, requires explanation. It is the purpose of this article to record the facts and to offer the explanation. The authority for most of the statements made is the Minute Book of the WEA Council, its records of Annual Meetings and its published reports.

The only account of these proceedings so far published is contained in Professor F Alexander's book *Adult Education in Australia*, where he wrote:

> ...these little conflicts did not rise to the heights of intrigue and personal rivalry which marred the Victorian scene in the twenties and thirties. There a skilful WEA Secretary had assisted in unseating at least two directors or assistant directors of tutorial classes at the University of Melbourne until their successor eventually brought this administrative Samson down in the ruins of his own WEA temple[2].

This, on the surface, appears to be a convincing account of the events, except that it is quite unsupported by any evidence. The 'successor' referred to in this passage, the Director of University Extension, Mr C R Badger, took up his duties in March 1939. The WEA Secretary, Mr S D Thompson, announced his resignation at the Annual Meeting of the WEA on 18 March 1939. It can hardly be supposed that the new Director, arriving only in March from Western Australia, with no previous knowledge of people or conditions in the Victorian WEA, was instrumental in bringing about the resignation of the WEA Secretary. As the WEA was not finally wound up until 1950, it would appear that it is possible that the fall of the 'administrative Samson' and the dissolution, so widely separated in time, are not causally related, and this is the truth of the matter.

If the mere presence of such a formidable figure as the young man from WA did not scare the WEA Secretary into resignation, which is highly improbable, what caused him to take this step? Part of the story is shown by the WEA *Minutes*. At the Annual Meeting of the WEA held on 18 March, the president, J W Tucker, and the treasurer, M Wyatt, were both defeated for office and a new president, H E D Stevens, and a new treasurer, H P Horne, were elected. Mr Tucker had held office continuously since 1930. The meeting, which was the second meeting of the WEA which I had attended in Melbourne—the first being that of the State Branch on 4 March—was a singularly acrimonious and contentious affair. It revealed at once that the Victorian WEA was engaged in a bitter internal struggle and that the Secretary and other elected officers had completely lost the confidence of a large section of the Council and members of the Association. It is significant that the *Minutes* of the Annual General Meeting record the bald announcement of the Secretary's intention to resign at the end of the financial year, but do not record any expression of gratitude, thanks, or regrets on the part of the meeting. A formal expression of regret is contained in the acceptance of his letter of resignation at the Council meeting on 22 April, the first meeting of the WEA Council which I attended in my capacity as Director of Extension.

The picture of S D Thompson as an 'administrative Samson' is absurd, even ludicrous to those who knew him well. He was a mild man, inoffensive, conscientious and well meaning, devoted to the WEA and very proud of his association with the University of Melbourne. He was not, I think it fair to say, a man you took to immediately. He lacked personal charm. His talent as an administrator lay chiefly in his ability to return a soft answer and so to control the complicated constitutional arrangements of the WEA that they resulted, over a long period, in keeping in office people who shared his taste for a quiet life and his loyal devotion to the immediate job in hand.

His resignation in 1939 was in no way due to any quarrel with the University. It was brought about by the fact that he had lost control of the WEA, where a group of reformers, impatient with the slowness and the seeming stagnation of the WEA, wanted root and branch reform. A committee had been set up in 1938 to remodel the constitution, many schemes for advance were being proposed and new men were insisting on a voice in the running of affairs. The Secretary was old, he liked peace and quiet and he was not willing to continue with a Council which, as the Annual Meeting showed, was no longer loyal to him and could not give him support.

It is alleged that the Secretary had been responsible for the removal of my predecessor from office. This is quite unsupported by the evidence. There was, indeed, a bitter personal quarrel between the Extension Director and WEA Secretary, dating from 1924 when the Director had tried to have the Secretary dismissed. Mr Thompson, however, was respected by the University generally and actively supported by Professor Sir Harrison Moore and especially by the Chancellor, Sir James Barrett. The decision to replace the Director of Extension was taken by Professor Raymond Priestley, the first full time Vice-Chancellor of the University of Melbourne. He needed an energetic extension officer to further his own plans for telling the people of Victoria about the urgent needs of their badly neglected institution. My predecessor was not dismissed. He had originally been appointed, as I was, on terms of five years. His appointment had hitherto been renewed at the end of each five year term. On this occasion, in 1938, the post was advertised and the current occupant asked to apply, if he chose to do so. It was University need and not WEA intrigue which precipitated this crisis.

When I arrived in Melbourne in 1939, Professor Priestley had resigned and a new Vice-Chancellor, Mr (later Sir John) J D G Medley, was in charge, and his policy did not require a forward extension move, though he took a keen interest in adult education and as chairman of the Extension Board gave me every encouragement and support.

The problem of 1939 was essentially and almost wholly a WEA problem. There were three issues: the first and most important was the appointment of a new Secretary; the second was the reform of the WEA Constitution; the third was how to compose the differences within the WEA which had led to the bitterness so clearly shown at the Annual Meeting and at the subsequent complimentary dinner to the departing officers, held on 15 April—the most unpleasant social function I can recall.

I do not propose to discuss the minor matters, but the first, the appointment of the Secretary, is important. The position was complicated. The General Secretary of the WEA was paid by the University out of the Government grant of £3,900, as Secretary of the Tutorial Classes Committee. He had at one time been called Organising Secretary of the Board. The WEA had virtually no resources, except the income derived from membership dues, affiliations and a part share of the class fees. In the existing state of tension within the WEA it was virtually impossible to get a Secretary who would be acceptable to both sides. An attempt on the part of the Executive (of which, unfortunately, there is no record) to get a snap decision failed as it was bound to do. The Extension Board made it clear to the Executive of the WEA that it expected to be consulted in the matter, since the WEA Secretary was also the Organising Secretary of the Board and since the University naturally had consulted the WEA in the appointment of the Director of Extension—there were two WEA representatives on the Selection Committee for that position.

The upshot was an agreement that the Board and the WEA should have a joint meeting to discuss the whole problem of their relationship and to clarify the question of finance, appointment of the Secretary and other matters. On 22 April 1939, the WEA Executive appointed its members to this joint committee, which met and presented a report to the WEA Council on 8 August. This meeting had before it a *précis* of the joint committee proposals, presented by the WEA treasurer. This involved joint finance, joint appointment of the new Secretary and a clear understanding that the WEA was to have a grant from the common fund for its own specific purposes. The Appointment Committee was to have equal University and WEA representation and conditions of the appointment were drawn up. The WEA Council adopted the proposals, applications were called and the joint committee met on 21 November to consider the applications. It is indicative of the tensions in the WEA at that time that while my vote was cast for an applicant known to be acceptable to Mr Thompson and to Mr Stevens, the new WEA president, three of the four WEA delegates voted with the University representatives for Mr T H Coates. Mr Thompson, at his own request, was not a member of the Appointments Committee. Mr Coates was appointed by the University as Organising Secretary of the Board, though the formal appointment was delayed until the meeting of the WEA Council, on 12 December, when by unanimous decision of the Council he was appointed as Secretary of the WEA.

From that moment the major tension in the WEA ceased and a period of fruitful and cooperative work was begun. The War, however, prevented the fulfilment of most of the plans and soon both Director and Secretary were engaged in War work. The WEA Council, through the War years, was the principal force in adult education and relations between the Board and the Council were cordial and close.

How then is the dissolution of the WEA to be explained? It was clearly not due to rivalry or hostility on the part of the University to the WEA or of the WEA to the University. It was not due to personal rivalry between the WEA Secretary and the University Director, for they worked together in the greatest harmony. To understand what happened, it is essential to look at the post-war situation.

The central problem was finance. At the first meeting of the WEA Council which I attended I drew attention to the need for expansion and set out proposals for raising money. The Government grant to the University (£3,900) had not been increased and now that the War was over and reconstruction appeared to be the order of the day, the financial problem had become acute. We had discussed all kinds of plans and the WEA Council was thoroughly familiar with my views, shared by most members and set out in a pamphlet published in 1944, *Adult Education in Post-War Australia*[3]. We called conferences and held weekend schools. But it appeared that adult education was still to be the Cinderella of education.

My dissatisfaction grew apace and early in 1946, after preliminary discussion with the Vice-Chancellor, I took the unusual step of tendering my resignation from the University, to take effect from 31 December 1946. The Vice-Chancellor was extremely sympathetic and kindly, but pointed out that the difficulties of the University were such that he could see neither prospect, nor indeed justification, for the kind of expenditure on adult education as a University–WEA function which I envisaged. The needs of the principal departments of the University—underfinanced and understaffed as they were and facing a huge influx of numbers—must come first. He urged me to withdraw my resignation, which at his request was never formally tendered to the University Council: various proposals for my transfer to internal teaching at the University were considered, but my mind was fully made up. It was clearly impossible for the University to allow the needed expansion of adult education. I was determined not to remain in the work unless expansion could take place.

The resolution of this deadlock came about because the Minister of Education in Victoria, knowing the valuable work done by the State Advisory Committee on Services Education, which had been led during the War by the Director of Education, Mr J A Seitz, invited the Committee to reconstitute itself as a committee of investigation into the state of adult education in Victoria and to lay proposals before him for possible implementation by his Government. The new Committee, as the WEA Council was informed at a meeting on 26 July 1946, was not composed of representatives of organisations, but of individuals invited by the Minister: the WEA Secretary (Mr J C Woodhouse in the absence of Mr Coates) and the Director of Extension were members. So was the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Melbourne.

The WEA Council members were kept informed of the discussions, but it was not until 23 October that I was able to outline the nature of the proposed Bill and to point out the consequences to the WEA if it was accepted by the Government. The Bill meant that the University would cease to be the principal agency for adult education—the finance and functions of the Extension Board passing to the agency proposed by the Bill, the Council of Adult Education. If this took place, the WEA could not continue to function, since it depended financially upon the University and its whole *raison d'être* was that of a voluntary body working in partnership with the University. At this meeting various possible ways of finding a new basis for a voluntary association to work with the proposed Council were discussed. To me, as from the beginning of my work in adult education with the WEA in Adelaide, adult education was inconceivable without a voluntary association working with a providing body and the WEA members were fully aware of my views.

The passing of the Bill, in December 1946, which was prepared with the help of Education Department officials and which embodied the conclusions and recommendations of the Advisory Committee, and the setting up of the Council of Adult Education in 1947, therefore came as no surprise to the WEA for the members of its Council had in very large measure been parties to the kind of discussion, clarification and preparation of public opinion which made it possible for the Government to act. On 10 February and 19 March 1947, a special WEA committee considered a memorandum from the Secretary and considered its future course. The meeting unanimously decided that the WEA should be wound up, that a new organisation to be known as the Adult Education Association of Victoria should be formed, with a constitution drawn up by the WEA Council, and that WEA assets should pass to the new association.

Negotiations with the new Council of Adult Education took place which ensured the Association of much the same relationship to the Council which the WEA had maintained with the University. These and other negotiations took a considerable time and it was not until 26 July 1950 that the WEA of Victoria finally ceased to exist, by the unanimous vote of its members at an Extraordinary Meeting called for the purpose. Most of the members of the WEA became members of the new body and many WEA stalwarts, including the first Secretary of the WEA in Victoria, L T Leathley, became members of the AEA General Committee.

The winding up of the WEA was a matter of some regret to those who believed in it and had worked hard for it. The future of adult education in Victoria, however, was thought to demand the change which had been discussed thoroughly, carefully prepared by consultation and agreement at every stage, and which left no ill feeling or sense of grievance.

Conclusion

The AEA, although formed by the WEA and succeeding to the assets of the parent body, is certainly not the WEA under a new name. The constitutional structure of the two organisations is quite different and the functions are differently defined.

It should be noted that the WEA had no vital connection with the trade union movement in Victoria: indeed it had incurred the active hostility of the Trades Hall Council. It was in no sense a working class movement and its interests in the later years of its existence were in the field of general adult education, rather than in that of workers' education. It is also true that repeated efforts to obtain Government support for the WEA itself, apart from the grant made to the University, failed completely. At the time of the discussion with the Government in 1946 it was perfectly clear that the Government would not consider a request for separate finance for the WEA which would have been strenuously opposed by the Trades Hall Council and by the ALP in Victoria.

The clarification of the position of the voluntary association and its relation to the new Council proved to be helpful in overcoming the difficulties which were inherent in the traditional WEA–University partnership. The CAE, to use the technical terms, is both a providing and an organising body: its functions are quite clearly defined in the original Act under which it operated (and by subsequent legislation)[4]. The AEA was first and foremost a voluntary organisation—it received no subsidy of any kind[5] and hence was completely free to express its critical opinions. Its functions were to help to influence public opinion by constant discussion of the need for adult education, to act as a critical and stimulating agency uncontrolled by the CAE but fully aware of CAE policy and activity, and to supplement the work done by CAE by activities which are outside the scope and finance of the Council. There was no occasion for clash between the two, since the AEA did not conduct classes and the CAE did not depend on it for organisation. There was, on the other hand, no financial tie between the two which would limit the capacity of the voluntary association to express its mind fully and freely on matters of CAE policy which the AEA felt to be not in the best interests of adult education. Although the relationship between the two bodies was very close, the AEA was not tied to the CAE and was perfectly free to work in the general field of adult education without reference to the CAE. It was not an auxiliary organisation: it was an independent adult education agency in its own right and standing on its own feet, which gave it a standing and practical influence far greater than the WEA, in Victoria at any rate, could possibly have enjoyed.

It is this factor, I am firmly convinced, which contributed more than any other to the cordial acceptance of the new situation by the ex-WEA members and to the unquestionable success and the present flourishing condition of the AEA.

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1 This paper was originally published in *The Australian Highway*, vol. 40, no. 7, December 1959, pp. 178–82.

2 Fred Alexander, *Adult Education in Australia: An Historian's Point of View*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1959, p. 53.

3 C R Badger, *Adult Education in Post-War Australia*, The Future of Education, no. 8, Australian Council for Educational Research, 1944. Reprinted as Appendix I in *Who Was Badger?*, Council of Adult Education, Melbourne, 1984, pp. 199–215.

4 No. 5181, An Act to provide for the Constitution and Functions of a Council of Adult Education, and for other purposes (1946) Section 4. No. 6143, An Act to consolidate and amend the Law relating to Education (1957) Part V, Adult Education, Section 65 (2). No. 9595, An Act to establish a Body Corporate under the Name of the Council of Adult Education (1981).

5 In more recent years the AEA has received financial assistance from the CAE, although this has always been provided on a 'no strings attached' basis .

PART III

SIR KEITH HANCOCK

SIR KEITH HANCOCK

A TRIBUTE FROM A GRATEFUL PUPIL

I am very grateful that an early plane from Melbourne to Canberra on Tuesday 16 August 1988 enabled me to spend a little over half an hour quietly and alone in the Church of St John the Baptist before the memorial service for Sir Keith Hancock began[1].

In that quiet time in the church I thought about him and of the impact of his life on mine. I thought of all I owed him, as teacher, guide, mentor and friend from the time I met him first in the Library of the University of Adelaide in 1926 until his death in this year.

I thought too, and sorrowfully, that when I spoke to him by phone on his 90th birthday and told him that I hoped to call on him soon, he said, 'Come—but don't leave it too long'. In our talk then, brief as it was, he asked, as he always did, about my children and grandchildren and with real concern for their welfare. Not one word about his troubles. I knew, though, from a visit paid to him in 1986 that he was not well and that his end might not be far off.

As I pondered these things in that church, I resolved to try to put down something to serve as my memorial and tribute to him. I was privileged to know him well over many years. There is now none left of the little band who undertook the Honours course in History under him in Adelaide in 1927. I alone am left to tell the tale and I determined that I should try to tell it. Perhaps—who knows!—what I now write may be useful to his future biographer.

But where to begin and how to proceed? I made one attempt, in the first draft of my autobiography[2], to say what he had meant to me in those early years. He read several drafts of the book but told me plainly that what I had written about him was embarrassing and he would not have it published. He approved, but I think grudgingly, the few sentences about him that finally appeared in the book. He quite liked the Latin dedication of the book to him. I think it amused him as coming from me, who had, as he knew 'small Latin'. He wrote, 'It will do'.

When I say that I met him in 1926 this is not quite true. 'Encountered' would be the better word, for I saw him for the first time in the Library of the University but I did not meet him in any formal sense.

I suppose I knew that the young man I saw on that day was the new Professor of History. What I now remember is the powerful impression this chance encounter made. He seemed so young, yet so self assured. There was an air of authority about him, yet also a kind of almost boyish diffidence. I marvelled at the way he asked a library attendant for the books he wanted, courteous, undemanding yet authoritative. I did not speak to him: I had no reason to. But then and there I knew that he was a very unusual man and that somehow I must follow him. He was a master—I must become his pupil.

And so, at the beginning of 1927 I began to study History. Until then I had no interest at all in it: Literature and Philosophy had been my chosen fields. Now I planned to embark on a course for the Honours degree in History.

My dear old friend and mentor R J Clucas, the University Librarian, told me, when I talked to him about the proposed course, that I should get a book by Margaret Anne Rolleston, *The English History Note Book*[3]. This, he said, would be an invaluable aid to my new studies. I bought it and invaluable it proved to be. I have it still and its battered condition shows how often I have consulted it. Since I knew nothing about History, its dates and summaries of events and people helped me to find my place in the larger studies on which I now embarked. Where else could you find out when and why the Reformation happened in England? The *Note Book* had it all neatly set out in a few brief paragraphs. And what was the War of Jenkin's Ear about? It had all the answers!

My impulsive decision to read History simply because I thought that Hancock would be an inspiring teacher was, on later reflection, both rash and ill advised; but I never regretted it. In 1926 I was well into my third year in English Literature and had a reasonable prospect of going on to an Honours degree in 1927. To begin then on an Honours degree in History meant that I must start a wholly new course, for four years, with no credit at all for the subjects in which I had already passed: under Hancock's direction, I asked to be allowed to combine History with Philosophy. This was accepted and I began the new course in March 1927.

The expectations I had formed of hard work and stimulating teaching in my new studies were not disappointed. In the first year we studied Constitutional History in England and the Tudors. The former subject was taught by Wilfred Oldham, the only other lecturer in the History School: he was not inspiring, but Hancock on the Tudors was all I had hoped for. My recollection of his lectures is no longer entirely clear but one short series he gave on the love affairs of Queen Elizabeth is still fresh in my memory. The lectures were highly entertaining and at the same time a useful introduction to the importance—and intricacies—of dynastic diplomacy in Elizabethan politics.

Best of all for me was the encouragement to read widely and to explore some unexpected areas of Tutor life. The two major essays I prepared in 1927 were on themes quite new to me. One was on 'Marriage Customs in the 16th Century': the other, an examination of More's statement in the *Utopia*, 'that your shepe that were wont to be so tame and so small eaters...became so greate devowrers...that they ete up the very men themselves'. For the first, I used several volumes of the Early English Text Society: for the second, I read the *Utopia* with great care and of course R H Tawney on the Agrarian Revolution: for good measure *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, a book bought in 1927 and still on my shelves.

What never ceased to amaze and delight me was Hancock's unfailing instinct for good, even if at times out of the way, books. In this year I read the Paston *Letters*, encountered the Haklyut voyages, met the disgruntled Puritan Stubbes and his *Anatomie of Abuses*. I also discovered the Parker Society, read Jewel's *Apologie* and dipped into Richard Hooker. The set books—Pollard, I think—were not as significant for me as those I found for myself or read at Hancock's often diffident suggestion that I might find them interesting or useful.

In this first year I saw little of him personally. I attended lectures punctiliously and very occasionally would call on him to ask directions for my reading or to discuss essays with him. My contact, however, was enough to convince me that I had not blundered in seeking to study under him. I knew that I had some demanding years ahead, but also that I might come to know him well and to learn from him what it might be like to be an historian.

It is characteristic of Hancock that the first group of Honours students he taught in Adelaide was put to the study of the European Renaissance and Reformation and not the Risorgimento, which was his special field. He had just published his Ricasoli book—among Italian scholars it earned him the cognomen 'il Hancock'. It is also characteristic that I never heard him refer to this book, nor did he set it for study in any of his courses. He gave me a copy in 1933 inscribed 'C R B from W K H with best wishes'. He told me that it had scarcely sold a few hundred copies in spite of laudatory reviews. He said later that in 1928 he was teaching himself the period we studied and that he kept only a few books ahead of his pupils. I doubt this: but he certainly said it.

The Honours group in 1928 had five members: Valerie Mounster was the only woman student, then came John Reynolds, Lewis Wilcher and Walter Harrison, who like me studied both History and Philosophy. We were I think a little above the average in application, if not in intelligence. Valerie Mounster was certainly an industrious and able student and deserved the first class degree she got. Wilcher and Reynolds both became Rhodes Scholars while Harrison, who did not succeed in History, was an able philosopher.

There were no formal lectures. We met in Hancock's room where we read the essays we had prepared. These were discussed by the group and commented on by Hancock. No marks or grades were assigned, though at times a sharply critical comment made you aware that you had not done well.

The room where we met calls for some comment. It was in a quadrangle at the rear of the main University building. In the centre of the quadrangle was a small stone building which had at one time been used as a lounge by male students. It was a dismal place, bitterly cold in winter and sparsely furnished. On the east wall a flight of stone steps led up to a passageway which opened on the left of the Chemistry school and on the right to the main University Lecture Theatre, the 'Prince of Wales'. To the left of these steps another set led down to a basement in which was Hancock's room.

The room itself was quite large and although partly underground was reasonably well lit. In the late afternoon, the Western sun flooded every corner of it. The room was chaotic. The Hancocks had no permanent house or home in Adelaide. They moved from place to place, always in rented dwellings, sometimes in places difficult to reach. I recall one house they had in the Adelaide Hills. It was reached by train, but from the station to the house you had to be conveyed by a man with a horse drawn cart. The University room therefore was their only permanent place. It was a dumping ground for household *impedimenta*, as well as a professor's office and study. At one time Theaden (Mrs Hancock) was building a large wooden dresser, which had pride of place on one wall. A large bookcase contained Ricasoli documents and books: there were boxes of books, boots, fishing and skiing gear, sheets, blankets, pictures and pillows scattered in confusion and disorder.

How Hancock did the work he did—in that year he was working on his book on Australia—in this abode passes understanding. He did not seem ever to have even a proper desk or table. I saw him often sitting on a low stool, typewriter on his knees, tapping out an article or a chapter of a book. He had no filing system, no card index, no evident means of finding anything at all. Yet in spite of this seeming chaos he was never at a loss. Theaden was at times angry with him, in their many arguments, at what she called his 'infallible nose for facts'. 'He is always wrong, damn him', she would say, 'but he always knows the facts'. It was Hancock who told me about Lord Acton's card index with its entry 'Mothers in Law. Instances of cruelty to'. That room, however, contained treasures for us. We saw for the first time the lively colour of pictures by Gozzoli—Hancock had several large reproductions prominently displayed. His collection of Alinari photographs of buildings and sculptures in Italy was made freely available. It was in that room that I first saw a reproduction of Piero della Francesco's *Resurrection*—to my mind one of the most moving pictures ever painted. Years later I saw the original at Borgo san Sepolcro and remembered Hancock with grateful thanks. It was not Hancock's way to lend his books, but I recall that he did lend me his copy of Rachel Annand Taylor's *Leonardo the Florentine*, newly published then and very exciting.

Our field of study was the Renaissance and Reformation. Of the set books I remembered little. There was a life of Lorenzo de Medici and Armstrong's *Life of Charles V*, Huizinga on the *Waning of the Middle Ages* and Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* and there were lives of Luther and Calvin. We were expected to read these but to read much else. Hancock's method was to set topics—these were for essays we prepared for him—but to suggest to each student areas we might like to explore for ourselves. He encouraged us to read the 'big books' as he called them, not necessarily long and detailed but of high quality. I was daunted by the length and complexity of Creighton's *History of the Papacy from the Great Schism to the Council of Constance*, but persevered with it. I bought a copy of Addington Symonds' *History of the Italian Renaissance*. We read books by Cellini, Landucci, Vespasiano and Vasari and dipped into the art history by Crowe and Cavalcaselle. We read Machiavelli, of course, Hancock's favourite, in translation but with notes and comments by A L Burd. He insisted that we should read a little of the great reformers—I tackled the *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* and read a little of Calvin's *Institutes*.

Since we all had Protestant backgrounds and prejudices he made us read—to hear the other side—what Catholic scholars had to say about the reformers. I remember especially a vitriolic book on Luther by a German Catholic and Maritain's slim volume *Three Reformers*. I also read with profit the great book by Villari on Savonarola.

While I rejoiced in the opportunity of close personal contact with Hancock which our small numbers gave in my first year of Honours, it was made difficult for me by what I thought was his harsh treatment of my efforts. I thought he always looked bored when it was my turn to read an essay and none of my work ever won his praise, though he occasionally praised the work of others. There was another difficulty: having completed a third year of study in English Literature, I thought I was a rather more than competent stylist—I cultivated a somewhat ornate and flowery style which had been approved by my previous mentors. Hancock would have none of it. He ridiculed some of my early efforts. He told me to buy and read Quiller Couch *On the Art of Writing* and made me look at every sentence critically. He demanded plain prose, no waste of words and no literary embellishments.

I suffered under this treatment and could never get him to recognise in any way what I thought were my merits. I badly wanted his approval but it soon became clear that I would not get it. I was put very firmly in my place which was near or at the bottom of the class. It rankled. By contrast, though, he showed me a personal friendliness and countenance which gave me great joy. He admitted us all to a very relaxed and easy *cameraderie* outside the class room. We were frequent visitors to the Hancock home of the moment and spent many happy hours with him in labours and games of his devising. I enjoyed, I am sure, especial favour in this way. From that first year until the end of my course and beyond, he gave me more of his time and admitted me to a personal friendship which went beyond that allowed to others.

Another trouble I had, which none of my fellow students seemed to share, was what to call him. 'Professor' seemed intolerable in view of his friendliness and the warmth of my regard for him, but my veneration for him was such that I would not have dared to call him Keith or by the nickname, 'Beppo' or 'Bep', which Theaden used and which I used when speaking to her of him. I dodged the issue and avoided any form of address. He called me 'Badge' from 1928 onwards. J M Garland, an economist friend, and I called him 'The Boss' or simply 'Boss'. It was not until very late in life that I called him Keith and he called me Colin.

Very occasionally something I did would please him. When writing *Australia* he asked us especially about the kind of slang we used, thinking that there might be some relation between our slang and that of the convicts. We talked a little about this and I suddenly remembered a book I had read while in the University Library. It had come to the Library as part of the estate of the late Chief Justice, Sir Samuel Way. I remembered it because I was struck by the fact that while it was originally a cheap, poorly printed book, Sir Samuel had had it rebound in handsome tooled green leather by a Parisian bookbinder. It was the *Memoirs* of James Hardy Vaux, a convict, and it contained, as a kind of postscript, 'A Dictionary of the Flash Language', a word list of thieves cant. I told Hancock about it and he was delighted.

He did not talk much about this book. Once, however, when we visited him at a seaside resort, he sat typing while we mulled noisily about the room. We were rowdy but he ignored us. When he had finished he read to us what he had written. It was one of the articles for the *New Statesman* which formed the nucleus of *Australia*. I think, too, he did tell us about the request from H A L Fisher that he should write the book.

Our little group thought ourselves greatly privileged to have such a teacher. We tried to adopt some of his mannerisms—we imitated his casual dress. I took to smoking a pipe and used the same tobacco. He suggested that we should organise ourselves into a reading party before the November examinations, but this idea was not adopted.

In 1929 I had to abandon the course as I could not afford even the modest fees the University required and had considerable trouble in that depression year to raise enough to live on. Hancock helped me greatly at that time. He appointed me as an examiner for the schools' Public Examinations, at that time conducted by the University. The fees paid were a great help at a most difficult time. My Philosophy professor, McKellar Stewart, gave me work as a tutor in Logic and I came through the worst of my troubles.

1930, when I was able to take up my course again, was a very heavy year. We studied the French Revolution and European History to 1848. The lectures Hancock offered for this period were prepared for pass students and not for the Honours group. To my mind they lacked something of the colour and sparkle of those of the Tudors and I think he was not greatly interested in the Revolution. The Honours group were more than rewarded, though, by his guidance through the intricate diplomatic goings on of the peace making process at the end of the Revolutionary wars. He was deeply interested in British, French and Russian diplomacy of the period. He made us read Talleyrand and Metternich and study the development of the Risorgimento. I found this work very rewarding especially as it fitted so well with what was my special work for Honours—a study of the origins of World War I. The prescribed text was by an American scholar Bernard Fay, supplemented by an English historian. I found Fay most interesting and valuable. He had scope and was not afraid to speak his mind. To supplement the Fay book, Hancock encouraged me to use the large collections of pre-1914 documents which by 1930 were available. I used Gooch and Temperley and *Die Grosse Politik* in the useful Dugdale selection and translation and dipped into some of the French and Russian material. I profited greatly from his skill and guidance in using these sources.

In this year, Hancock offered a short course of lectures for the Honours group on Political Philosophy. He began with the *Politics* of Aristotle, made brief surveys of Hobbes and Locke and included Machiavelli, of course, both the *Prince* and the *Discourses*. He also drew attention to the *De Monarchia* of Dante. The course ended with the work of two 19th century British philosophers, T H Green and Bosanquet. It fell to my lot to read an essay on Bosanquet. It was lengthy and dull, but I don't think it deserved the castigation I got from Hancock. He found it insufferable and said so. I had put hours of work into it and was mortified. 'Don't worry', he said, after I had made my vexation plain, 'I dislike Bosanquet as much as you do'—but he put it much more idiomatically and tersely. What he actually said was, 'I think he is a bit of a shit too'. It was during these lectures and consultations that he would sometimes take two or three of us to a nearby pub, to continue the talk over a glass or beer. He always paid. We rejoiced in these occasions; few of us in those days ever ventured into a pub, let alone to drink beer in the presence of a professor!

There was no examination at the end of 1930—the finals were in 1931 when the work of two years was tested. Late in November 1930 he told me that he would lighten my load in 1931, since he knew that I had a heavy year in Philosophy. But, he said, he would like me to do further work on the origins of World War I and to give special attention to the origins, fortunes, purposes, successes and failures of the Triple Alliance. He said that although there was no documentary source like the German and British documents for Italy, he would require me to learn to read Italian and to work on the Italian participation in the Triple Alliance with whatever material I could find. It was a condition of the Honours degree in History that each candidate must have a reading knowledge of one foreign language. In 1930 I spent time on German and made some progress. He would not accept that: he thought Italian would be more relevant for me. He told me to buy an Italian *New Testament*—"You will quickly get the hang of it', he said, 'Don't bother too much with the grammar, read as fast as you can and acquire a vocabulary'. He gave me his own copy of Cellini and a little leather bound edition of the *Fioretti*. There was no University teaching in Italian at that time—the few Italians I knew were Calabrian peasants, barely literate and speaking only their own dialect. I bought a grammar, a dictionary and an anthology of prose and verse and worked hard. At the beginning of the first term in 1931 I was able to read enough Italian to work on the documents of the Triple Alliance; and I had discovered Leopardi!

I remember two incidents at about this time. There was serious trouble on the waterfront at Port Adelaide, where striking wharfies attacked other workers recruited to do their work. A call went out for volunteers to 'keep law and order' on the waterfront. Many university students responded and joined the special guards' troop. With a few others I went to Port Adelaide to help the wharf labourers. We were firmly rebuffed and told to go home, but the 'specials' remained. The university authorities delayed the annual examinations to accommodate those who volunteered. Hancock was very angry—he told us that it was our business to attend to our studies and not to take part in matters we did not understand. He sneered at the volunteers—'Young heroes' he called them—and told them that it would have been a very proper reward for their efforts to have had their heads broken by well aimed bottles. He set us to read a book on *Casual Labour on the Waterfront in Seattle* and told us that the History examinations would be on the date he set and not on that approved by the University.

The second incident occasioned me much distress and anxiety. At a time when there was intense controversy over the proposal by the then Federal Treasurer, E G Theodore, to issue fiduciary bonds, Hancock elected to give a public lecture on the financial aspects of the French Revolution and the issue of the *Assignats*. The lecture was given in a crowded lecture hall and attended by most of the business and financial *élite* of Adelaide. I thought it was a blatant piece of propaganda, the more diabolical since it was impeccable as a lecture on History and made no reference whatever to what was uppermost in the minds of the auditors. The conclusion was plain—don't go down the inflationary path, or you are on the road to ruin. I found it impossible to reconcile this exercise with anything I knew about Hancock. I could not think it was anything but what it seemed to be and yet I could not believe that Hancock would allow himself to become involved in what seemed to me a very dubious bit of political propaganda and some very dirty politics. Years later I asked him about it. 'Yes', he said, 'I think I was wrong. I knew about inflation in Germany at first hand and very little about the *Assignats*'. And he left it at that.

Late one afternoon we sat in a lecture room near the Elder Conservatorium. As Hancock lectured, a young lady in the Conservatorium began to practice her scales; up and up she went, relentlessly, pausing only almost imperceptibly before she reached the topmost note. As she went up and up, Hancock stopped lecturing—we all waited to see if she would make it to the very top note. She did. 'Christ', said Hancock and went on lecturing. It was the only time I heard him blaspheme. He never swore, never told dubious jokes and was almost Puritan in all his linguistic and social habits.

One good piece of work that Hancock did in the Depression years was to agitate for help for the Public Library which had been sadly neglected. He set about campaigning for funds and started a Friends of the Library movement. It attracted good support from the Adelaide Establishment which had many enlightened members.

None of us as students was admitted to the dining clubs he organised among his friends in his Adelaide years. They were a very select circle; but I heard about some of them and had the *Minutes* of one—'The Society for Reforming the Ten Commandments'—for a while. This club held ten meetings. At each dinner a paper on a Commandment was read, either supporting it or rejecting it. A single blackball removed the Commandment. One was accepted in an amended form, 'Thou shalt not covet anything of thy neighbours' except his wife'. Another was 'The Society for Pissing against Banks' whose rules meant that after dinner each member had to find a bank and piss against its walls. To be caught meant expulsion. After this the party got together to listen to a paper against the Capitalist Society. How Hancock recruited members for this society from among Adelaide's grave citizens, I don't know; but I did know one of the members and was amazed that he should have joined—a tribute to Hancock's persuasive charm.

I married at the end of 1929 and we had a small convenient flat in Tynte Street, North Adelaide, for a year of two after that. Hancock came to dinner with us there on the night when Theaden had the operation which put an end to their hopes for children. His anxiety for her and his distress were painfully obvious. He left us after dinner and I think roamed the streets for most of that night in his misery. We could not help or console him.

After completing my course in 1931, I set about writing a thesis under the terms of the Tinline scholarship which I had won. I worked on an aspect of South Australian history and greatly enjoyed the exercise of using original documents in the South Australian archives and of reading rapidly through parliamentary debates—a good training for my later research on the Italian parliamentary system.

I saw a great deal of Hancock in the years before he left Adelaide for Birmingham in 1933. I was one of the little band of runners and paper chasers in the Adelaide Hills which he formed. Others were J M Garland, Economist; Denis Garrett, Botanist; Geoffrey Leeper, Chemist; John Bald, Plant Pathologist; and Phipps, a Geneticist. We began our run at the Waite Institute and finished there with copious afternoon teas. We conducted paper chases, took part in many ingenious games of Hancock's devising and at times went for exercises which he liked especially—all night walks through the hills, with large breakfasts at country hotels in the mornings. Whenever we stayed or breakfasted at these little hotels, he would always ask to be allowed to go to the cellar to look for old bottles of wine. He sometimes found one or two and was delighted. One I recall we opened and drank part of outside the hotel at Meadows. It was dreadful. Hancock stood up after taking a swig and demanded, 'Ye little hills—why do you skip?' The nearby fields at that time were covered by large mushrooms, which we gathered freely.

He was perhaps a precursor of gamesmanship. He knew all about the art of winning without actually cheating. One of his favourite games was *Circlos*. It could be played anywhere with a rope stretched between two posts for a net. A heavy rope quoit was used to throw between the players. It was a simple game but he used it with devastating skill to confuse and baffle his opponents. He would throw it with great force—but side-stepped attacks from the enemy. He complained bitterly if they seemed to take an advantage. He wanted to win and almost always did. We thought he cheated but it could never be proved.

He was a tricky horse to hunt in *Hounds and Horses*. Once we followed his paper trail to the very edge of the Silver Lake at Mylor and then it was gone. We searched and searched but no trace could be found on this or the further shore. We gave up and went from the lake hoping to find him elsewhere. He had gone into the lake, submerged, breathing through a straw, and he stayed there until we, baffled, had gone. Then he came out and taunted us because we had lost his trail and had not thought of such an obvious solution.

Again, we went on an all night walk and part of the jaunt was a contest as to who could cross Silver Lake first in a canoe, the loser to pay for breakfast. All our money was on J M Garland, a good oarsman who had rowed for Ormond. Hancock won easily—how? He had gone a few times and tested all the canoes and so arranged matters that Garland got the worst and heaviest and he the lightest. We thought his victory due to his almost supernatural powers—it was in fact a reward for careful planning and forethought.

When the Hancocks had special guests or visitors we were generally invited to meet them. I remember especially a young German scholar, Karl Heinz Pfeffer, who was writing about Australia. He was a most attractive young man, although he was at that time an ardent Nazi and admirer of Hitler. He was coopted into the running team and proved to be a most agreeable member. He later published his book called *Die Bürgherliche Gesellschaft in Australien*. I tried to struggle through it, but with not much success. We also met Fred Alexander, the Western Australian historian. He arrived in Adelaide to see Hancock after a visit to Russia which included the adventure of crossing Russia *via* the Trans Siberian Railway.

I think it was in 1932 that the Hancocks brought a car and learned to drive it. We had several excursions with them in that capacious vehicle; but the one I remember best was a camping trip to Second Valley, at that time a secluded and lovely beach. We worked hard for most of the afternoon gathering brush wood and seaweed to make our beds. We had no tents but slept under the stars. As we lay in bed Hancock began to talk to me about the text books then used for History in the schools. The subject was much in his mind at that time. He made a wager with me to see who could produce what he called a 'brat book' within three months of that time; the manuscript to be ready for publication. I knew I would lose that bet and never attempted to write a book. He, however, wrote quickly and the result was *Two Centuries of Change* published by OUP in 1934 and reprinted in 1938. As he talked I dozed off and fell asleep. He talked on until he realised that he no longer had an auditor.

Early in 1932 I was asked by the University to supervise the removal of the Library from the main University building to the newly completed Barr Smith Library. The plans for the removal had been very carefully drawn up by R J Clucas, the University Librarian, who died in 1930 three weeks before the foundation stone of the new Library was laid. Because of the work I did on the removal I had some hopes that I might succeed Clucas as Librarian. I applied for the post and Hancock supported my application. He told me later that although he had given me strong support, he had added, almost as an afterthought, that he thought I would not be happy in the job and would soon attempt to seek a wider field. That addendum to his reference finished whatever hopes I might have had. I don't know that I would have been appointed anyway, but he made it certain that I would not. He told me later that it was very important in writing references to praise the candidate highly and then to insert your doubts into the last paragraph.

This was a bitter blow to me. I had no job, no secure income and no prospects—the Library job seemed ideal to me and yet my good friend had destroyed my chances. I did not know what to make of it. But he was right. Had I been appointed as University Librarian then, I am sure that I would soon have been an unhappy, disgruntled man, looking for other prospects. Settling down then, even with a secure job and income, would not have been the best plan for me.

When the time came for the Hancocks to leave Adelaide in 1933, I was deputed to look after and dispose of such of their effects as they could not or did not wish to take with them. I remember that I was told to give a copy of Marie Stopes' *Married Love* to the celibate Professor of Classics and other books to other people. Some special treasures I was asked to look after and to bring with me, for with Hancock's help I was enrolled at the London School of Economics, to begin a research program there early in 1934. Among the treasures he left for me to get rid of were large collections of notes he had made on books. There were also several highly interesting little black note books which had lists of words from his extensive reading, jottings about books and articles he intended to write and little groups of sentences where he tried out various forms of expression. He told me that he kept these little note books by his bedside and used them often when he could not sleep at night. I have included here, as an example of his style of note taking, his observations of Machiavelli. I kept this and still have it. The other materials, alas, I have lost or destroyed.

The Hancocks welcomed us to England. Soon after we arrived, they let us have their house in Birmingham while they were on holiday in Austria. At Christmas time we kept house for Keith while Theaden was abroad. I heard him give his splendid lecture on 'Machiavelli in Modern Dress' to the Historical Association in Birmingham in January 1935. He was working furiously at that time on his great *Survey of the Commonwealth*. I was mystified that he should choose to work on that and to neglect the big book on Nationalism which I knew he had in mind. He and I and fellow guest, the New Zealander W P Morell, who had written on the *Colonial Policy of Peel and Russell*, debated this at great length, but Hancock knew that he had chosen wisely. He told me that the £1000 Sterling he was paid for that book was the only substantial money he had ever got from his literary work—it bought them their first house

It was at this time that his mind was fully engaged with the problems of Nationalism—he told me to read Lord Acton's essay on 'Nationality', which made a deep impression on my mind.

After I came back to Adelaide in 1935 I wrote to him often and got back many welcome and valued letters. Among them was one which created a sensation in Australia when I read excerpts from it over the ABC network in 1940. It was later published as a leaflet by the Department of Information[4], and did much, I think, to lift morale in those dark days.

Most of the letters I had from him then and subsequent correspondence are in the Library of the National University in Canberra. I hope that these letters will be useful to the writer who undertakes his biography. Over many years I had from him help, inspiration and guidance. I think it one of the most fortunate days of my life when a chance encounter led me to learn from him. He is the greatest man I ever met. *VALE.*

One of the saddest times I remember was when I saw Theaden and Keith in 1960. They lived in a house near the University in Canberra, near where a memorial fountain for Theaden is now to be seen. Theaden was very ill. I was allowed to see her only briefly and knew that she was dying. Keith was almost beside himself with grief. He raged up and down the house shouting at his cat, *'Felice, Felice'*.

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1 This paper was originally published in the *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, no. 18, 1990, pp. 18–27.

2 C R Badger, *Who was Badger?*, Council of Adult Education, Melbourne, 1984.

3 Margaret Anne Rolleston, *An English History Notebook*, Davis & Moughton Ltd, Birmingham, Fifth Edition, Revised, (n.d.).

4 'Frankness and Faith: an Australian sums up from England', Department of Information, 1940. In Hancock's own autobiography, *Country and Calling*, Faber & Faber, London, 1954, pp. 234–5, he describes the same incident as follows: 'A good many Australians had got to know my voice over the wireless. How that happened, after I had made a vow in September 1939 never to broadcast a word that might be called propaganda, is an odd story. In the spring of 1940 I was moved to write a long letter to my old pupil and friend, Colin Badger. The Germans were just through the Ardennes and the war map showed their first penetrations into the French lines; these little wedges, I told Badger, will grow into a bulge and the bulge into a gap and the French will soon be down and out and our army back in England. The Germans then will be after us. Let them come! So long as we have the navy and the R.A.F. the Channel is good against their tanks. And if any of them do get through we'll give them 'ell, D.V.! The nation has found itself, it has found the government it wanted, it is unconquerable...And much more to the same tune. In Britain it was everybody's tune but Australia was a long way off and how could people there know that we in Britain felt grand? My letter reached Badger in the thick of the disasters it had prophesied. He declaimed it over the wireless. I became all at once a kind of J B Priestley in my own country. Wireless reputations seldom last long and I did not trade too much upon mine, but throughout the war and particularly in its bad and lonely patches I sometimes talked over the air with my friends at home.'

HANCOCK'S NOTES ON MACHIAVELLI

SUMMARY AND CRITICISM:

Note:

Education and experience: that of the practical politician and man of affairs: not that of the political philosopher.

The experience that of a States system where no Government was rooted in tradition, law, moral allegiance, and in a world where traditional Christianity was almost in the state of Roman ruins.

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Had it not been for the disaster which came over him in 1512 he might never have written anything but despatches.

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'Even Machiavelli could not escape the idealism which besets us all'. The inspiration of all his writing is the desire to find a cure for the misery of Italy.

His Subject—is first and foremost his own Italy: but he intends to reach beyond that: to consider the nature of POLITICAL POWER in general. (Perhaps a pity that he did not confine it frankly to his own Italy.) His concern is with ACTUAL STATES—not the State.

His Premises

1. **Experience**—can tell us all we want to know. A clean break with juristic and theological schools. 'Machiavelli was not a systematic thinker. He was a man of extremely acute perceptions and capable of subtle and searching analysis of the concrete'. (Allen)

2. **Man does not change**—hence the cycle—selfishness and greed (of the class in power and of the Government seeking domination) leads to endless rise and fall of regimes in succession.

3. **He has thus already implied a psychology**—that man is moved by his selfish desires, that he is rascally, greedy, ungrateful, etc.: i.e., anti-social and anarchic. The State, therefore, can only rest upon a self-interest which desires public order for its own ends.

   Yet, in the preface to the *Discorsi*, Machiavelli professed a desire to work for the common good without regard to private interest—and throughout the *Discorsi* he implies that such a desire, wide-spread, is a condition of strength in the State—tho' a condition unlikely to be fulfilled for long (and produced by the illusions of a Numa).

4. **What then is goodness?**—Whence the idea of it which men have planted in their minds? It comes from Numas and other politic heads.

It is one of the illusions with which men are tricked for their self-preservation.

Justice he says, arose when men saw that the ills they inflicted on others in pursuing their interests might also be inflicted on them. And power, thus originating, established (in the interests of itself) distinctions between right and wrong. Gradually, men came to conceive of actions as *absolutely* right and wrong—a useful *illusion*.

> There is no absolute good or evil.
> The terms have no transcendental reference.
> They refer to the community as an association of individuals—in the end, to individual interest.
> Therefore, no *lex aeterna*, no *lex naturalis*.

What does he mean when he says that political science must assume the badness of man? Simply that men are ready to follow *il suo particolare* whenever it pays them to do so. But, in the last resort, this is only *bad* from its effect on the interests of the other members of the community, which depend upon this sort of thing being stopped.

All this is implied in Machiavelli's statements. But he was not aware of his implications: he would have been ill at ease if they had been brought out in a *viva*. His inner idealism at war with his reflections on the world in which he lives...a not uncommon happening. He left so many things merely hinted at: when the hints are developed, results of which Machiavelli was unaware are discovered: he implied so much and explained so little: and his implications are conflicting because at bottom he was himself confused.

Mac, you old muddler!

It's well enough for you dons, Mac answers, but really, these things don't interest me! Look at what happened! Perhaps I can't tell you what public spirit and the common good are in themselves, but look at my *Discorses* and you'll see it proved that the Stability of States (and this, Political Power, is my study) depends on Public Spirit, which in turn is bound up with Religion, Liberty, Equality, Law and Army.

If you go wrong in these, Public Spirit is impossible, and the State, through corruption, decays.

Yes, says *the Don*—but how can you possibly get this public spirit out of your bad egotistical man? And to be concrete in the way you like—how can you possibly get it in Italy, today—where religion is dead, liberty is dead, military valour is dead...You can't get rid of the foreigner without a national army, and you can't have a national army without public spirit. (Exactly what is lacking with the mercenaries is public spirit.) How can you do this, Mac?

Only by a superman—'tis almost impossible—'tis easy for such a man not to arise. He must be bad, for he will have to wade in the blood and mud of this corrupt country. He must be good, for his dream must be the country's regeneration. And this is why I wrote the *Prince*.

Of course, the *Prince* is not a book for despots...Machiavelli is not concerned with Law, and its relation to right: he never mentions or discusses a Right to absolute obedience: He would have thought it impossible. His problem is, how to use the power which you have. How to keep States in order and add to them...in the year 1513. 'A piece of journalism dealing with current politics'.

Naturally, he does not run counter to the prejudices of the living Prince to whom the book is addressed. He does not show his whole mind on history and politics: sticks to the situation. Yet he says repeatedly that the only strength of the Prince is in having the support of his people.

The *Prince* 'a particular application to Italy of the principles laid down in the *Discorses*'.

'The *Prince* expresses no theory of Government...' All that is implied is that a Prince who adopts the right policy and is intelligent and ruthlessly resolute, might well succeed in liberating Italy from the foreigner, if not in overcoming all opposition and uniting the country. 'That is a judgement that concerns the Italy of 1513, and nothing else in the world'. (Note first book of the *Florentine History* shows that Machiavelli saw Italy as having lost a unity that was in some sense natural.)

Is there inconsistency? Perhaps just this—in the *Discorsi* he says that no State ever extended its dominion except in liberty—how then could a Prince achieve his end? 'The inconsistency of a man whom hope has made a little blind'.

Ethics and Politics

He raised a very serious question: 'tis hard to see how he answered. He did not separate the two. He applied the same ethical test to actions of individuals and actions of rulers—the test of the common good. It implies a condemnation of murder in the one case, a justification of it in the other.

A *utilitarian* test: no personal goodness: goodness only in action and result.

A low conception of good, a low ethic: good is only referrable to human welfare (specially security) in a particular society.

No natural law: no belief, as mediaeval people believed, that man's intuitions were of an absolute, of God's purposes in the universe.

That is implied in much of which he wrote, tho' he is not consistent.

Sometimes he says: this is not good: but if you do not do it you will come to grief...*Salus populi*, he sometimes says...Many loose and ambiguous utterances...But in general—Good action is that which tends to preservation of the State. The State exists for satisfaction of certain primitive desires. Action tending to satisfy these is therefore good.

> This is the ethical doctrine.
> The State is a morally isolated thing.
> The 'good' refers only indirectly, even, to the well-being of the community regarded as an undying entity.

Might not the futility of Italian political effort be connected with the fact that his principle has been the Italian principle?

Yet he had raised a serious question.

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The Machiavellian State

'If the besetting sin of mediaeval political thought was that it too much disregarded the actualities of the moment, the sin of Machiavelli lay in regarding nothing else.'

He not only ignores fundamental questions, but implies that they are not worth asking. He thought he was concerned with what men actually were. The end of the State is what rulers do actually propose to themselves...men are just made like that.

No concern with obligation...nothing beyond the purposes of man...the State has no relation to God or any cosmic purpose—because it has no obligations to anything outside itself. All its relations and connections are accidental. No reason for its existence, except that men will it to exist—for their own selfish security.

A most accurate description of the Italian State—but more than that—'it was a forecast'—of the modern State, 'meaning by that of States ever since'.

e.g. 1. the State secular—and they become so
2. the Church an instrument of Government—it is done
3. the State aims at increasing power—universal
4. Diplomatic expediency above faith
5. the State based on nation is strongest...this the aim.

'A forecast of extraordinary accuracy. The accuracy of that forecast involves to what may be called accurate political thinking. It can hardly be called a contribution to political thought'.

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His Method

Historical? Supposing we possessed a vast mass of historical generalisations, what sort of inference could we draw? Not Machiavelli's unvarying sequences, unless, like him, we postulated an unchanging humanity. It we don't, there is little we can get—only guide, to some extent, 'in our little opportunist dealings with what we call the present'.

Of ultimate possibility, and of value, history tells nothing, *in fact* Machiavelli is unhistorical—

1. his use of authority is uncritical
2. his central idea of selfishness and no-change not an historical induction
3. he assumes that circumstances, like men, do not change: that Roman conditions etc are like to Italian ones.

In fact, Machiavelli generalises from his own experiences...he relies on general impressions.

Even so, they are based on observation, more or less disciplined...a method of much validity in relation to the questions he asked i.e. those concerning political power...admittedly a secondary question.

And the age interested in other questions—relation of State to Church and true religion: relation of subject to ruler, which includes question of obligation. Nothing from Machiavelli here. Calvin and Hooker almost unaware of him.

PART IV

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THE MADONNA OF BUNBURY

While at the University of Western Australia I was a fairly frequent contributor to the Saturday edition of the *West Australian*. I owed my introduction to its pages to the good offices of Paul (later Sir Paul, Governor-General of Australia) Hasluck, at that time a leader writer for the paper. I also owed him my first and only appearance in a play for he gave me the part of Third Tempter in his production of T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*—a first in Australia.

Hasluck staged the play in the grounds of St George's College, with its chapel as a kind of back drop. Becket was played by the Warden of the College—named Canon Law. The Fourth Tempter was played by the Senior Lecturer in Economics—a New Zealander, John Shearer. I have never seen the part better played.

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I have kept only one article of the many that I wrote then and reproduce it here mainly because it may serve to recall the name of Ethel Anderson, Poet, Painter and most gracious lady.

THE MADONNA OF BUNBURY

West Australian, 9 October 1937

After a far too perfunctory stroll around the town I had almost decided that Bunbury held nothing of special interest for me. It was sheer good luck that I found the picture at all. There is no Baedeker to Bunbury!

I had noticed the old church in the centre of the town, the church which I learnt later is called St Paul's Cathedral, but I did not know that it had anything remarkable in it, and merely thought in passing that it might be worth a visit. It is old, amidst a lot of new things not all of which are handsome. It has pleasantly weathered old bricks, nice wooden shingles on the roof and is most attractively set amidst fine trees and lawns—a good spot to lounge by on a summer's day. If the town offered nothing else of great interest I determined to visit the church to satisfy an idle curiosity about the inside. There might well be some interesting bits of old furniture in such a church, some good brass, possibly wood carving by a craftsman of the old days, perhaps a picture. Fortunately I did go back to it and there, on the north wall, opposite the door, was the Madonna.

A most interesting picture. It is an altar piece, obviously in the Italian tradition, with very bright colour, suggesting water colour or pastel rather than oils, perhaps a trifle too bright and staring in what I take to be the glory of its relatively fresh painting. It is a very large picture, 5 ft by 6 ft, with a light wooden frame. It catches the eye immediately on entering the church, lighting up its sombre shade, radiating a glory of light and colour as if to rival the brightness of the sunny space outside. Exactly like the glory of fresco in the dim solemnity of Italian churches of the 14th and 15th centuries, it is its reminiscence of Italy which makes the picture so unusual in its setting and position. I should say at a venture that its author had certainly studied in Italy and at a guess that the predominant influences in style had been Fra Filippo Lippi with possibly Signorelli in the background. Botticelli certainly the artist has studied with living attention and studied well, for while not in the least imitative or derivative, having indeed strong individual character in itself, this picture is in the classical ecclesiastical tradition. It is an altar piece and an altar piece which would not be unworthy of a place in a fine Italian church.

The subject is the Madonna enthroned with the Child standing on her knee, His two fingers raised in the traditional gesture of blessing. Around the Madonna are two attendant angels, in the foreground is St Catherine with her wheel half covered by falling leaves and with her St Teresa with a closed book. The colour scheme is simple and direct, very reminiscent of Fra Angelico's pictures. It may possibly be considered a little too harsh, though for its position and subject the cold hard colour is very suitable indeed. It has the virginal freshness and gaiety which the scene demands. The most notable things about the work as a whole are, first, the richness of the drapery which has a very beautiful and intricately-wrought pattern of fold on fold, and secondly, the exquisite sculpture-like modelling of the faces. Some parts of the picture, it may be consciously, are a little out of drawing; the whole gives that indefinable 'feel' of imperfect mastery over technique or over some parts of technique, perspective and anatomy, which makes Italian painting from the 13th to the mid-15th century so fascinating. Thought and feeling are all there, only it seems that power is lacking to convey them so perfectly to the canvas that the effort is not to be seen from the picture itself. There is still strain, effort, tension. But such effort is the antithesis of dullness which only too often comes with perfect mastery of the medium.

It is a very fine picture indeed, an exiting discovery and one I had not looked to make in

Bunbury. All the more astonishing because it hangs there and never a word to say where it came from or who the painter is. I racked my brains for a full half-hour before it to solve this enigma and then fled to the courteous Archdeacon of Bunbury to resolve my perplexity. It appears that this picture is the work of Mrs Anderson, the wife of Brigadier-General Anderson of Turramurra, and that the artist gave it to the Bishop of Bunbury to adorn the cathedral. To my shame and regret I have to confess that I know nothing whatever of Mrs Anderson's work, a defect I shall remedy as soon as may be. With my perplexity resolved I came back to the picture and spent my time most profitably in admiration and contemplation of it.

As I sat and looked my fill upon it I thought of many places in Italy which are renowned by having one great thing. I thought of Borgo San Sepolcro: there is no adequate reason why anyone should go to San Sepolcro apart from one picture. It is a moderately uninteresting little town, it has nothing in the way of architecture or sculpture or historical association to commend it to the notice of the curious. Yet look at the visitor's book of this little place and you will see it is crammed with names of the great and of the less great.

The secret is that Borgo San Sepolcro has a picture, the *Resurrection* by Piero della Francesca. Not as well known perhaps as the famous *Mona Lisa*, it is even better worth seeing, and to it critics and artists come from the ends of the earth.

Well, perhaps it may be so with Bunbury in the days to come. I don't know. Possibly this picture will not attract visitors from the whole Commonwealth, and Bunbury may find no need to enlarge its hotels or to build a shrine to house its treasure. For all that, it is worth seeing, and certainly worth making a trip to Bunbury to look at. It is delicate and beautiful; it needs to be approached with the pilgrim spirit for it has an uncommon beauty. I hope to make several pilgrimages to see it again.

It would be easy to overpraise it, to claim too much for it; equally and still more fatally it would be easy to neglect it and underpraise it. I shall always count it a fortunate day in the calendar which led me to see it unexpectedly, delightfully. Perhaps in the true style I ought to burn a candle to this Madonna!

Green Shutters
South Perth

October 10, 1937

C.R.B.
The *West Australian*
Perth

Dear Sir,

We were very interested in reading your article in yesterday's issue on 'The Madonna of Bunbury'.

I have cut the article out in order to send it to the painter of the picture, Mrs Anderson of Turramurra. I think she will be grateful for your appreciation as it is the first that has appeared (in WA) in print. Should you go to Sydney you may be glad to have her address, and be shown by her perhaps other(s) of her paintings, especially those in the Children's Chapel in the crypt of St James' Church, Sydney.

Mrs Anderson
Ball Green
Turramurra NSW

The full facts about the picture and its being in Bunbury are that Mrs Anderson wrote last year to my husband, then Bishop of Bunbury, to ask if he would accept her best bit of work in memory of some spiritual help he was able to give her long ago. She wanted him to have it as an Altar piece in some suitable Church in his Diocese. Unfortunately there is at present no suitable Church that could receive it as such, and so he offered it to the Bunbury Cathedral with the idea that later it shall form the altar piece in a Chapel of the new Cathedral that will someday be built.

The picture's symbolism is intended to be—The eternal significance of heavenly things, and the transitionness of the earthly—as shown by the falling leaves—St Teresa's book dropped from her hands—St Catherine's wheel not in use, etc. etc.—some verses description of it were left with Archdeacon Adams, written by a friend of Mrs Andersons. I rather wish you could have incorporated these in your article.

Thank you again for having written it. Many in Bunbury have not quite appreciated the picture, recognised its [?] and traditional connection with Italian art. They will more easily do so, perhaps. Believe me,

Yours faithfully

(Sgd) A Ethel Wilson
(Mrs Cecil Wilson)

GOVERNMENT HOUSE

CANBERRA

Ball Green
Turramurra

October 23rd

Dear C R B

The Bishop of Bunbury and Mrs Wilson have both sent me letters, and a copy of your very kind notice of my picture in Bunbury. I very much appreciate your kindness in writing about it; and the delightful way your article is written, and the knowledge and sensibility it shows, make me feel more happy over it than I should have been over the ordinary type of notice. You know your Italy! You are right too, about the effort; the sense of strain you talk of; the picture was painted, a variation of a theme by Filippo Lippi—in twelve days; and I was up at sunrise, and peering at the canvas at dusk.

If you find yourself in Sydney anytime, my husband and I would be so glad to see you, if you cared to come and see us, at Ball Green.

With my very sincere thanks for your encouragement, and my own congratulations to you, in turn, on your own sense of style in writing,—I think your article is so well handled,—so cleverly written!

Yours sincerely

(Sgd) Ethel Anderson